

T H E
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE,
HISTORY and LAWS,
Relating to
OATHS and VOWS,
LEAGUES and COVENANTS,

Set forth in a full and clear Light.

W I T H
An INTRODUCTION,

Occasioned by one of the Fundamental Propositions
in Mr. WHISTON's *Scripture Politics*; and con-
cluding with a summary DISSERTATION upon
the same important Subject.

A WORK long wanted, and much desired, in order to the
Solution of such *Doubts and Scruples*, as are apt to arise
in the Minds of sober and serious Persons, concerning
the solemn *Nature and Obligation* of those sacred OATHS,
which all of us are, or may be, required to *take* on va-
rious Occasions, according to our respective Offices or
Employments.

Because of Swearing the Land mourneth, Jerem. xxiii. 10.

L O N D O N:

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T H E

SCRIPTURE-DOCTRINE

Relating to

OATHS, VOWS, &c.

T H E

INTRODUCTION.

MR. WHISTON, in his *Scripture-Politicks*, published in 1717, gave Occasion, amongst other Things, to a more particular Review of his *Ninth Proposition* relating to OATHS; which (he says) is “one of *his* Fundamental ones, and must be proved
 “by an Induction of Particulars, as
 “was the foregoing, in order to the
 “Reader’s more intire Satisfaction.”

Whist. Script.
Polit. 1717,
P. 54, 55.

And, to the same honest End, the REMARKS contained in the following Sheets, which appear to have been long made ready for the Press, are now thought fit to be laid before the World; since they can never be unseasonable, while the Doctrine of *Oaths*, seems either, in general, not to be sufficiently understood, or else, in particular, that the solemn

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Nature

Nature and Obligation of them is too little regarded.

THE PROPOSITION is this, That “the whole
 “Scripture ever supposes the Obligation of Lawful
 “Oaths to be sacred and inviolable; and particu-
 “larly, in the Case of Leagues and Covenants be-
 “tween different Nations, and between Kings and
 “their People; even where great In-
Ibid. p. 54. “conveniencies arise by the Observa-
 “tion of them. Accordingly, private Subjects,
 “under the Obligation of an Oath of Submission,
 “are bound to obey any King, or supreme Go-
 “vernour, and to keep the same Oath, and bear
 “the Inconveniencies of that Person’s Govern-
 “ment and Oppressions, till his Death, or till God,
 “by some other Methods of his Providence, de-
 “prive him of that Power of Government, but
 “no longer.”

Now, I shall not dispute the *sacred and inviolable Obligation of Lawful Oaths*, whatever *Inconveniencies* may arise by the *Observation of them*. But, the latter Part of this Proposition contains several Clauses, which, when carefully examined, and duly weighed, will be found light in the Balance; as I shall fairly demonstrate in the Course of this Undertaking.

§. I. HE says, “The first eminent Instance, as
 “to the inviolable Sacredness of solemn Vows,
Ibid. p. 55. “which are the most open Oaths or
 “Appeals to God, even where there
 “was the greatest Inconvenience imaginable in
 “keeping to the Rigour of them, is the Case of
 “*Jephtha* —.”

THE Case here cited was briefly this. *Jephtha*, in his Expedition against the *Ammonites*, hoping to procure the Divine Assistance, had
Judg. xi. 30, &c. *vowed a Vow unto the Lord*, which after the Victory, reduced him to the
 greatest.

greatest Distress : Yet, because of his *Vow*, he declared himself so firmly bound to perform it, that he *could not go back*, tho' it concerned him no less than the Loss of *his only Child* ; and therefore he *did with her according to his Vow which he had vowed*. For the better understanding of which Case, it is necessary to consider,

1. THE Import, or Matter, of his *Vow* ; which (according to our Translation) was, absolutely, *Whatsoever cometh forth of the Doors of my House to meet me, when I return in Peace,—shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a Burnt-Offering !* But, according to the original Hebrew, noted on the Margin, the Words will bear a more natural and inoffensive Construction, by reading them, not conjunctive, but disjunctive, thus, *Whatsoever cometh, &c.—shall surely be the Lord's, or I will offer it up for a Burnt-Offering* ; meaning, if it were an human Creature, to dedicate the same to *the Lord's* Service, after the solemn Manner, and prescribed Law, of the *Nazarites* ; or, if it were any other Animal, proper for such a Sacrifice, then to *offer it up for a Burnt-Offering*.

2. As to the Performance of it, the Text says, —*His Daughter came out to meet him,—who did with her according to his Vow*. Whence ariseth a Question, much controverted, Whether he actually did *offer her up for a Burnt-Offering*, or only dedicated her to *the Lord* in a State of perpetual Virginity ? Among the rest, who understand it in the former, and most rigorous, Sense, *Whist. P. 55.* Mr. *Whiston* here argues, that “ the plain Law of God, in that Case, at least as “ joined with his Daughter's own voluntary Consent, made it necessary for him to do it.” But as to the *Law of God*, here referred to, it is far from being so plain, in *Lev. xxviii. 29.*

that Case, as he supposeth : For, the *Cberem*, or the great Curse, by which the Persons therein mentioned were *devoted to Death*, extended only to wicked and hardened Offenders, but never to the Innocent, as *Jephtha's Daughter* was. And, as to what he calls *her own voluntary Consent*, it seems more clearly, as well as rationally, to infer her being devoted to a Virgin's Life, rather than to Death, from those Expressions in the Text, that *she bewailed her Virginity*, — and *she knew no Man*; (which, among the *Jewish Women*, who lived in Hopes of bringing forth the promised *Messiah*, was a very uncomfortable State :) And moreover, this latter Construction is still the clearer, from the original *Hebrew Reading* (noted also on the Margin) of the following Words, *That the Daughters of Israel went, from Year to Year* (not to lament, but) *to talk with the Daughter of Jephtha—four Days in a Year*. But, what Mr. *Whiston* has added, to inforce his own Notion, is not only singular, but groundless and inconclusive. He supposeth, That

Whist. p. 55. “ God did not think such a terrible
“ Example as this too severe, to establish the inviolable Sacredness of Oaths, among
“ the *Jews*; and to let them know, in the most
“ affecting Manner, that he was in Earnest, when,

“ in the Third Commandment, he
Exod. xx. 7. “ assured them, *He would not hold*
“ *them guiltless, who took his Name in vain.*”

Surely, the awful and tremendous Manner in which this, and all the Ten Commandments, were given, by God himself, was a Demonstration sufficient, that *he was in Earnest* when he promulgated his

Laws, with *Thunders and Lightnings*,
—*xix. 16, &c.* and a thick Cloud upon the Mount,
and the Voice of the Trumpet exceeding loud, so that
all the People that was in the Camp trembled,—and
the

INTRODUCTION.

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the whole Mount quaked greatly. Yea, 'tis plain, that all the Assembly of the People, having heard God speak these Words, with a great Voice, out of the Midst of the Fire, of the Cloud, and of the thick Darkneſs, —xx. 1, 19.
Deut. v. 22, &c.
—xviii. 16.

were ſo terrified, that they petitioned Moſes, ſaying, *Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God ſhall ſay, and ſpeak thou unto us, all that the Lord our God ſhall ſpeak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it* — But, let us not bear again the Voice of the Lord our God, neither let us ſee this great Fire any more, that we die not! All which proves, that they knew, God was in Earneſt, when he ſo gave them the Ten Commandments. And every one may ſee, how the holy Scriptures abound with Proofs of his Averſion to the *taking his Name in vain*: But, there is no Colour of Proof, (nay, it would be Blaſphemy to ſay it) that, whenever a Man *vows a Vow*, or *ſwears an Oath*, God will require him to perform it, in Manner and Form, without Diſtinction, whether it be Right or Wrong, Juſt or Unjuſt! In ſhort, according to Mr. *Whiſton's* Way of arguing here, he muſt ſuppoſe, that God was not in Earneſt, when he, over and over, expreſſly declared his Abhorrence and *Abomination* of all Human Sacrifices; or elſe he can never believe ſuch an One acceptable to God, on account of *Jephtha's* raſh Vow; when (he knew) the ſame God would not permit *Abraham* to proceed to ſuch a Sacrifice, tho' (for a Trial of his Faith and Obedience) he himſelf had expreſſly commanded him to undertake it! But,

3. As to the Obligation of this Vow; tho' there is an expreſs Law given in general Terms, that *If a Man vow a Vow unto the Lord, or ſwear an Oath to bind his Soul* Numb. xxx. 2, &c.

with

with a Bond, he shall not break his Word; he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his Mouth: Yet that very Law contains divers Exceptions; as in the Case of a *Maiden-Daughter*, or a *Wife*; either of whose *Vows* are, as expressly, declared not to be of any Force or Obligation, without the Sanction of her *Father's* or *Husband's* superior Authority. And much less then can any such *Vow* or *Oath*, be obligatory, as is, in its own Nature, contrary to the Law of God himself, the supreme Legislator; inconsistent with the Duty of Subjects to their natural Sovereign, or other proper Superior; or repugnant to any Office of Piety, Justice, Mercy, or Charity. "For, whatever is in itself forbidden by God, and for that Reason unlawful; whatever is against any Precept of natural or revealed Religion; whatever is inconsistent with those relative Duties, which Men owe to one another; whatever, in short, is, in any Respect, sinful, cannot, by being made the Matter of a *Vow*, become justifiable. So that He, who hath vowed to do what cannot be done without Sin, is so far from being obliged to perform his *Vow*, that he is, notwithstanding his *Vow*, obliged not to perform it; because there is not only great Obliguity in making such an unlawful *Vow*, but this Obliguity is so far from being lessened, that it is aggravated by keeping it." Supposing therefore, that *Jephtha's* Vow was absolutely so extensive, and that, in Pursuance thereof, he actually did offer up his innocent Daughter for a *Burnt-Offering*, it was so far from being made necessary by the plain Law of God, or even excusable by his Daughter's own Consent, (supposing it had been voluntary, tho' the contrary is rather to be concluded, from her so long bewailing her Condition)

Stackh. Hist.

Bib. fol. 617.

tion) that “ we may safely and confidently aver,
 “ with the *Jewish* Historian, that the
 “ Sacrifice, which *Jephtha* offered, Jos. Antiq.
 l. v. c. 9, cited
 ibid.
 “ was neither lawful nor acceptable
 “ to God ; but, on the contrary, a
 “ very impious Act, and an abominable Crime ;
 “ tho’ it might possibly proceed from a mistaken
 “ Principle of Religion.” For, ’tis certain, that,
 as all human Sacrifices were expressly forbidden, as
 an *Abomination to the Lord*, he must
 have been guilty of a grievous Sin Deut. xii. 31.
 in making such a *Vow* ; but much more so if he
 perform’d it. Upon the Whole therefore,

4. IT is very reasonably concluded, that “ it
 “ would be absurd to suppose, either that *Jephtha*
 “ would have vowed to offer the first
 “ Creature, indifferently, that came Humphrey’s
 Annot. f. 721.
 “ out of his House, as a *Burnt-Offer-*
 “ *ing* to God, without Distinction of clean and un-
 “ clean, fit or unfit ; or, if he had, that the Priests
 “ would have suffered him to accomplish it, when
 “ the Victim proved unlawful and redeemable, and
 “ would have been an *Abomination* to God, as well
 “ as a Scandal to all the World.”

§ II. Now, to proceed ; Mr. *Whiston* says, “ The
 “ second remarkable Instance of the Sacredness of
 “ an *Oath*, and that in point of Whist. Scrip.
 Pol. p. 55, 56.
 “ Leagues between different Govern-
 “ ments, is the Case of the *Gibeonites* ;
 “ which League was also obtained by the Knavery
 “ and Prevarication of that People ; and was, in
 “ the *Israelites*, a sudden rash Thing, done by sur-
 “ prise, a Breach of the Command of God for the
 “ utter Extirpation of those wicked Nations of
 “ *Canaan*, and a very impolitic, disgraceful, and
 “ disadvantageous League. So that almost all the
 “ Circumstances thereof seemed to plead for the
 “ Disso-

“ Dissolution of the same. Yet did the Princes of
 “ *Israel*, and *Joshua* at their Head, so well know
 “ the Sacredness of all such Covenants, wherein a
 “ solemn Appeal to God, upon Oath, had been
 “ once publickly made, that they would not be
 “ moved by the Murmurings of the People, nor
 “ bear the least direct Infraction of
Josh. ix. 3, “ the same.—Nay, what is farther
Ec. —x. 1, “ remarkable, they not only did not
Ec. “ slay them themselves, but they ha-
2 Sam. xxi. 1, “ zarded Battle, to deliver them from
Ec. “ the Hands of the other neighbour-
 “ ing Kings, who were come to destroy them, on
 “ Account of this League. Nor is it less remarka-
 “ ble, how God punished *Saul*, and his bloody
 “ *House*, with the Body of the *Israelites*, who join’d
 “ with him, for attempting, long afterward, to
 “ destroy these *Gibeonites*; tho’ he pretended to do
 “ it *in his Zeal to the Children of Israel and Judah*.
 “ So sacred and inviolable was the Obligation of
 “ an Oath, even in this Case, then esteemed both
 “ by God and good Men.”—And so indeed it
 well might, since there was nothing, *in this Case*,
 properly considered, *in all its Circumstances*, which
 could afford any sufficient Plea, for the Dissolution
 of that *League*, or of the *Oath* by which it was
 confirm’d. For,

I. THE *Gibeonites* were not of the Children of
Israel, but of the Remnant of the Amorites; who
 having heard what *Joshua* had done
2 Sam. xxi. 2. unto Jericho, and to Ai, (where he
Josh. ix. 3, &c. utterly destroyed both Man and Woman,
 young and old) made use of a Stratagem, to procure
 a League with them, for the Preservation of their
 own Lives; which, between Enemies, in an open
 War, seems to be allowed, by the general Consent
 of all Nations, and not condemned in Divinity.

But,

But, how blame-worthy soever it might be thought, in the subtle *Gibeonites*, by such a *Wile* and Artifice, to impose upon their dreaded common Enemy, it does not follow, that the *Israelites*, who were thereby drawn into a *League* with them, how *disgraceful and disadvantageous* soever, could justly take the Advantage of their own Credulity and *impolitic* Conduct, to *dissolve* the Obligation of it. But,

2. IT does not appear, that the *Israelites*, by *letting them live*, did indeed receive any real Damage by that Imposition, but rather the contrary. They now had not only the full Possession of the *Gibeonites* Territories, but the Benefit also of their free and voluntary Subjection to the lowest Offices of Servitude; which last they could not have obtained, if they had gratified their own Resentment by putting them all to the Sword. And, besides,

3. THE Command of God for the utter Extirpation of those wicked Nations of Canaan, does not seem to have been so absolute and peremptory, as Mr. *Whiston* here supposeth it was. For, if so, the Oath of *Joshua* and the Princes of *Israel*, had been unlawful in itself, and not to be kept; so that their sparing the Lives of the *Gibeonites* had then been a grievous Sin, and *Saul's* attempting afterwards to destroy them, had been a dutiful Action. But, tho' the Law given by *Moses*, was without any Exception express'd, to *smite them, and utterly destroy them—to make no Covenant with them, nor shew Mercy unto them*: Yet we find it must have admitted of an Exception implied, where the Meaning of it is explained by the Practice of *Moses* himself; who sent Messengers unto *Sihon King of the Amorites, with Words of Peace,*

—ver. 25, &c.

Exod. xxiii.

32. --- xxxiv.

12.

Deut. vii. 2.

—xx. 17.

Num. xxi. 21,

&c.

Deut. ii. 24,

&c.

C

notwith-

notwithstanding God had promised to *give that King, and his Land*, into the Hands of the *Israelites*. And we read of a Tradition among the *Jews*, that, before the *Israelites* entered into the Land of *Canaan*, they sent Offers of Peace to all the chief Cities, according to an exprefs Precept; and that they who submitted were made *Tributaries*, but the rest who refused, (as their Writers suppose, the *Gibeonites*, amongst others, did at first) were devoted to *Destruction*. From whence we may fairly conclude,

Stackb. Hist.
Bib. fol. 478.
Deut. xx. 10.
&c.

1. THAT if Peace may be offer'd, it must be granted, even to idolatrous *Canaanites*, if they accept of the Terms; and much more so, when they are humble Suitors for it, as in the Case before us. No wonder, therefore, that *Joshua*, and the *Princes of the Congregation*, who had sate in Council with *Moses*, and therefore best knew the full Purport and Meaning of all these public Laws, did, so soon after the Death of *Moses*, consent to a *League* with these unknown Supplicants, to *let them live*, and justify it, even after they had discovered them to be *Canaanites*, upon this Principle, *We have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel, now therefore we may not touch them, lest Wrath be upon us, because of the Oath, which we swore unto them.* And,

Josh. ix. 15,
&c.

2. THAT such Leagues, when solemnly made, even with Heathens and Idolaters, (as these *Gibeonites* were) or with Hereticks, perjurious, or other profane Persons, ought not to be violated, on Account of their Idolatry, Heresy, Difference in Religion, Perjury, Profaneness, or personal Immorality. For, if any such Thing could warrant or excuse our Perfidiousness to those to whom we are under natural or other lawful Engagements,

we

we might as reasonably plead for our Breach of Faith and Duty to any One who has ever broke his own Baptismal Vow !

“ But then (says Mr. *Whiston*) how little Liberty God has given private Subjects, when once a Nation has, in general, put themselves under Subjection to any Person, and taken an Oath of Fealty to him, we may partly learn, from the Conclusion of the Divine Standard for the Power of Kings among the *Jews* : — As if they were still to look upon themselves bound to submit to that hard Servitude to their King, which their own Choice had brought upon them, till it pleased God, by some Method of his Providence, to take him away from being their King any longer.”

Whist. Script. Polit. p. 57.

Now, this refers us back to his *Fundamental Proposition*, herein before stated at large ; wherein we ought to consider these following Particulars :

Supra, p. 2.

I. WHAT he can properly mean by *Private Subjects*. It seems to imply, as if there were some Subjects, in a public Capacity, not under the same Obligation of Obedience and Submission, as *Private Subjects* are. But, who these are, he does not inform us. 'Tis evident, from the very Text, which Mr. *Whiston* himself has here cited, that they were not *Private Subjects* only, but a Convention of all the Elders of Israel gathered together, to whom Samuel pronounced that Divine Standard for the Power of Kings ; — *Ye shall be his Servants ; and ye shall cry out, in that Day, because of your King, which ye shall have chosen you ; and the Lord will not bear you in that Day* : Nor doth it appear, throughout the whole Bible, that Subjects, in the highest and most public

1 Sam. viii.

17, 18.

lic Stations, are any way dispensed with, in point of *Obedience and Submission* to their Rightful Sovereign, more than every *Private Subject* is. And, (to go no farther, for an Instance of this, than to the Constitution of our own Kingdom) it is no less demonstrable, that all the Three Estates of the Realm (*viz.* the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal, and the Representatives of the Commons) when assembled together, even in the highest Court of Parliament, acknowledge themselves to be his *Majesty's most Dutiful and Loyal Subjects*; as, indeed, they are all bound to be, by Natural Allegiance, without the additional Obligation of Oaths to confirm the same, as much as any *Private Subject* can be. For,

2. THO' Mr. *Whiston* seems to lay the main Stress of the Obligation upon their having *taken Oaths of Fealty*, he should have considered, that such *Oaths* are, properly, no more than a solemn Confirmation of that Duty, to which, as natural-born Subjects, they were under a prior, and indispensable Obligation. For, so it is, that there may be an Obligation to *Obedience and Submission*, without any *Oath*: As there actually is, in all Hereditary Countries, by Birth; the Subjects being thereby *bound*, in the strictest Ties of Allegiance, to their Natural Sovereign, and his right Heirs, which no contrary *Oath* can vacate or dissolve. So that, if any *Oaths* be imposed, which are contrary to, or inconsistent with, this indispensable Duty of Natural Allegiance, such *Oaths* are unlawful in themselves; and consequently, cannot either be taken, or performed, without Sin.

3. As to the proper Object, or Person, to whom this *Obedience and Submission* is due, Mr. *Whiston* applies it to *Any King, or Supreme Governor, to whom an Oath of Fealty is taken*. But this cannot, by

by any Means, be admitted, without a necessary Distinction. For, we all know, there have been, even in *England*, divers *Kings* (vulgarly so called) whom our Laws properly stile only *Pretended Kings*, or *Kings in Fact, but not of Right*; and so was *Oliver Cromwell*, in Fact, the *Supreme Governor*: And yet, notwithstanding *the Nation had, in general, put themselves under Subjection*, and actually taken *Oaths of Fealty*, to them respectively, no good *Englismen* will say, that Obedience was due to any of them, either in Law or Conscience; or that the *Oaths*, so unwarrantably taken, could bind to any Thing but Repentance. And,

Stat. 1. *Edw.*
IV. c. 1.

4. MR. *Whiston* also, not distinguishing properly, between *Authority* and *Power*, *Providence* and *Permission*, &c. has unwarily drop'd another gross Absurdity, concerning the Duration of the Subjects Duty of *Obedience* and *Submission*, which he supposeth to continue *till their King's Death, or till God, by some other Methods of his Providence, is pleased to deprive him of that Power of Government, but no longer!* And, so big is Mr. *Whiston* with this his favourite Conception, that he brings it forth, again and again; as I shall have Occasion to shew by and by. In the mean time, I must say, it is strange that he should have forgot the old Lawful *Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance* (which he himself had probably taken, with the rest of the Nation) *to the King, and his Heirs, and Lawful Successors!*

HOWEVER, he thinks to illustrate his *Hypothesis*, by the Examples of *David* and *Jeroboam*: But, how little those Cases are to his Purpose, is easily discovered. For,

1. As to the Case of *David*; he says, "Even after *Saul* had been rejected, and *David* had been
" anointed

" anointed by God in his Room, and when *Saul*,

Whist. Script. " at the same time, unjustly fought

Polit. p. 57. " his Life, we never find *David*, in

" the least, aiming to usurp the King-

" dom, or to hasten *Saul's* Death, in order to his

" own Succession : *But* we do find him, as one of

" *Saul's* Subjects, leaving him in the

1 Sam. xxvi. " Hands of God ; as waiting his

10, 11. " own Time for his Deliverance

" from him, and his Exaltation af-

" terwards." This, indeed, is a most

Hom. against illustrious Example of *Passive Obe-*

Rebell. Part ii.

dience ; and, as such, is highly cele-

brated by our Church, in her Homilies. But, if

Mr. *Whiston* had duly considered the very Text

which he himself has here quoted, he must have

observed, 1. That *David* was not then a *Private*

Subject, after he *had been Anointed by God's* express

Designation ; tho' that was not in *Saul's Room*,

but only to succeed him after his Death : And

therefore, being still his faithful *Subject*, he was so

far from *aiming to Usurp the Kingdom, or to hasten*

Saul's Death, that he, with a just and generous

Abhorrence, refused his Consent to it, even when

his Followers would have persuaded him, that *God*,

in *his Providence*, had thus pointed out a *Method*,

and opened a Way, to his immediate *Exaltation*,

by *taking Saul away from being King any longer*.

And, 2. That, it is evident, *David* had no No-

tion of any *other Methods of Providence*, to make

the Throne vacant, *in order to his own Succession*,

but either the King's natural *Death*, or being slain

in Battle by the Hand of the common Enemy. But,

2. As to the Case of *Jeroboam*, which Mr.

Whiston says, " was not much diffe-

Whist. Scrip. " rent from that of *David*," it will

Pol. p. 57, 58. be difficult for him to find just

Grounds

Grounds for any Comparison; unless it be in that which he calls. "a Commission from God to inherit Ten of the Twelve Tribes," after the Death of *Solomon*, as *David* expressly had to inherit the Whole, after that of *Saul*. But, even in this Respect, the Comparison will not hold. For, 1. Notwithstanding all the Glosses upon the several Texts, commonly quoted in Proof of it, a more full and impartial Review of the Case, in all its Circumstances, will make it evident, to a Demonstration, that *Jeroboam* had not, properly speaking, any such Commission from God, as *David* had. Nor, 2. Did *Jeroboam* wait God's Call, and apply to him, to know his Divine Pleasure, but took upon him to exercise the Sovereign Power, upon the Invitation of a factious and rebellious People only; whereas *David*, tho' solemnly anointed, would not presume to enter into the Possession, after *Saul's* Death, till he had first inquired of the Lord, and received his special and express Direction so to do. However, 3. Even from Mr. *Whiston's* own State of, what he calls, *the only Difference in the Case*, " (that *David*, of course, from his " Allegiance, and without any direct " Command from God, seems to " have spared *Saul* all along; while *Jeroboam* did " it in direct Obedience to the Will of God, particularly declared by the Prophet, &c. with respect to *Solomon*,)" it plainly appears, that the Duty of Obedience and Submission to rightful Sovereigns is equally incumbent upon all Subjects, without Distinction of their Rank or Station, high or low, public or private; and that too, even to those

See *The short
Hist. of the
Regal Succession*, &c. Edit.
4th in 8vo. p.
213, &c.

1 *Kings* xii. 3.
2 *Chron.* x. 3.

2 *Sam.* ii. 1, &c.

Whist. Script.
Pol. p. 58.

by

1 Kings xi. 28,
40.

by whom they may, perhaps, be persecuted with mortal Hatred, as these were :) For both *David* and *Jeroboam* were mighty Men of Valour, and highly distinguish'd, as well for Power as Dignity, above the Degree of private or particular Persons.

It is therefore not a little surprizing, that so great a Master in Logic and Mathematicks, should from such Premisses, take Occasion to repeat this his precarious Conclusion, "That 'tis the Will of

Whist. Script.
Pol. p. 58.

" God, in such a Case, for particular Persons, to bear patiently the Hardships they endure, under their Lawful Kings, 'till it pleases God, by their Death, or otherwise, to deliver them from Oppression under them; I say, by their Death, or otherwise: For, we may observe, that any other Method of Providence, which removes such a Tyrant or Oppressor from the Government over us, does also deliver us from our Obligation to Obedience to him; there being, in all the Bible, I think, (*says he*) no Obedience ever required, to any other Prince or Power, than that which actually has Dominion over Men!"

Now, surely, Mr. *Whiston's* Memory was very treacherous here, to forget the known Cases of *Manasseh* and *Nebuchadnezzar*, both plainly recorded in the Bible: Wherein he might have remembered to have read, that, tho' they were severally

2 Chron. xxxiii.
11, &c.
Dan. iv. 31,
&c.

otherwise removed by Providence from the Government over their respective Subjects, before their final Removal by Death, so that for a long time, they had not actual Dominion over Men, yet their Subjects, all that while, never thought themselves thereby delivered from their Obligation to Obedience, and the Bond of Allegiance, wherein, by Birth,

Birth, they were all indispenſibly obliged to their Natural Sovereign; All which is fairly proved in the Book before referred to; and even by Mr. *Whiſton*

Short Hiſt. &c.
p. 203, 204.

himſelf acknowledged, as what *will deſerve our Attention*, (tho' he ſeems here to have ſoon forgot it)

" That, during the time of *Manaſſeh's* Captivity

" at *Babylon*, the Nation did not ſet

" up another King; but owned him

Whiſt. Script.
Pol. p. 46.

" for their King all the while, not-

" withſtanding ſuch his Abſence and Imprifonment;

" and, when he was brought again to *Jeruſalem*,

" he thereby was brought again into *his Kingdom*

" alſo, without any new Difficulty.

THE ſame might alſo be enforced by divers other Caſes in the Bible, equally deſerving our Attention: Where 'tis recorded, how

faithfully and conſcientiouſly *Zadock*,

2 Sam xv. 24.
--- xvii. 17.

and *Abiathar*, the Priests, with all the

Levites, perſiſted in their bounden Duty of Obedience

to *David*, while he was removed from the Govern-

ment, and actual Dominion, upon *Aſſolom's* Rebellion

and Uſurpation: And how religiously

the Priests and the Levites, and ſuch

2 Chron. xi.
13. &c.

as ſet their hearts to ſeek the Lord, main-

1 Kings xii. 19.
2 Chron. x. 19.

tained their Obligation to Obedience

ſtill, to the right Heir of their Law-

ful King, even when Ten Tribes of *Iſrael* had re-

volted, and rebelled againſt the Houſe of *David*,

under the Conduct of that wicked Re-

1 Kings xv. 30.

volutioniſt, *Jeroboam*, whom the Ho-

ly Ghoſt has branded with this black Character,

that he *ſinned, and made Iſrael to ſin*.

§ III. " ANOTHER Instance (Mr. *Whiſton* ſays)

" we have of the Sacred Nature of Leagues, of

" even Homage and Submiſſion, tho'

" without the expreſs mention of an

Whiſt. Script.
Pol. p. 58.

" Oath, for that purpoſe, in *Hoshea*,

D

" King

“King of *Israel*.” — But all that appears material in his Case, is, That, after he became Tributary to *Shalmaneser*, King of *Affyria*, he was found to have conspired against him with the King of *Egypt*; which brought upon him the Siege of *Samaria*, his own Imprisonment, and the Captivity of the Ten Tribes soon after. To which Mr. *Whiston* might as pertinently have subjoined the Case of *Jeboiakim*, King of *Judab*; who having, in like manner, been subject to *Nebuchadnezzar*, tho’ without the Express mention of an Oath, afterwards rebelled against him, and thereby hastened both his own Ruin, and that of his Native Country!

§ IV. “ANOTHER Instance (*he observes*) we have of the Sacred Obligation of Oaths of Fealty or Allegiance, in the Case of *Zedekiah*; who, having been made King of *Judab*, by *Nebuchadnezzar*, King of *Babylon*, and obliged to him by an Oath, — that he would be faithful to him, was heavily, both he and his People, punished for such Perjury — and Breach of the Oath which he had taken;” according to the Prophecies of *Ezekiel*, which need not here to be repeated at large. ’Tis sufficient, to observe, 1. That, tho’ *Nebuchadnezzar* was a most notorious Idolater, and outrageous Persecutor of those who worshipped the true God, as well as the Person who profaned and destroyed the Temple of the Lord, which was the Glory of the *Jewish* Religion and Nation; yet all this was no Excuse for *Zedekiah*’s Perfidiousness to him. And, 2. That, when he was thus made to swear by God, his former

2 Kings xvii. 3,
&c.

2 Kings xxiv.
1, &c.

2 Chron. xxxvi.
6, &c.

Whist. Script.
Pol. p. 59.

2 Chron. xxxvi.
10, &c.

Ezek. xvii. 12,
&c. xxi. 25, &c.

2 Kings xxiv.
17.

2 Chron. xxxvi.
13.

Dan. iii. 13, &c.

mer Name of *Mattaniah* was changed to *Zedekiah*, (which signifies *The Justice of the Lord*;) to put him continually in mind of the Divine Vengeance, which he might in *Justice* expect to fall upon him, if he should break that lawful Oath, as he afterwards did.

§ V. "ANOTHER remarkable Example of the
 " inviolable Sacredness of Oaths,
 " (selected by Mr. *Whiston*) is that in *Whist. Script.*
 " the Case of the Six Hundred Ben- *Pol. p. 60, 61.*
 " *jamites*; who were all the Remainder of that
 " Tribe, after the terrible Destruction they had
 " brought upon themselves, by justifying the hor-
 " rid Rape and Murther, committed upon a Le-
 " vite's Concubine of *Gibeah*. For *Judg. xxi. 1.*
 " *the Men of Israel had sworn in Miz-*
 " *peh, saying, There shall not any of us give his*
 " *Daughter unto Benjamin to Wife. They had also*
 " *made another Cherem, or great Oath,*
 " *concerning him that came not up to* — ver. 5.
 " *the Lord, to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be*
 " *put to Death!* This last Oath, how
 " severe soever it might seem, accor- *Lev. xxvii. 28.*
 " ding to the Law of *Moses*, already *29.*
 " mentioned, they executed imme- *Judg. xxi. 10.*
 " diately upon the Inhabitants of *11.*
 " *Jabesh-Gilead*, who had not come up to *Mizpeh*
 " to assist them. And, for the former Oath, it
 " had reduced them almost to the Necessity of
 " either losing a Tribe out of *Israel*, or of break-
 " ing the said Oath; the latter part of which *Di-*
 " lemma they yet could no way think of submitting
 " to, even in this great Distress of their Affairs,
 " where Humanity, and publick Welfare, seemed
 " so highly to call for a Dispensation. *Howbeit,*
 " say they, *we may not give them* — ver. 18.
 " *Wives of our Daughters: For the*
 " *Children*

“ *Children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed be he that giveth a Wife to Benjamin!* They were brought into this Difficulty, says Bishop *Patrick*, by their Oath; which being rashly made, it might be thought, ought not to be kept; but they had such a Reverence to a solemn Oath, that they had resolved to do all that was possible to find a Way to keep their Oath, and yet not let the *Benjamites* be without Wives. Which at last they accomplished, not without a sort of Violence and Rapine; and which yet they preferred before the direct breaking of the same.”

Now, this (which Mr. *Whiston* looks upon, as so remarkable an Example of the inviolable Sacredness of Oaths) only shews us, how superstitiously tender the *Israelites* were at that time, of the supposed Obligation of all Oaths, that they made no Scruple to transgress divers other plain Precepts of the Moral and Divine Law, for the Performance of what they had, ever so rashly and unadvisedly, sworn. But, if we allow ourselves to consider the Case, with all its Circumstances, fairly and without Prejudice, we shall find good Reason to condemn them, both for taking such Oaths, and for keeping them when so taken. For,

I. THEIR swearing, not to give any of their Daughters in Marriage to the *Benjamites*, must oblige their Brethren, either to live unmarried,

“ which would prove the Extinction
Stackb. Hist. “ of their Tribe; or to marry the
 of the Bible, “ Daughters of Heathens, which was
 fol. 611.

“ contrary to their Divine Law; or
 “ to take to themselves Wives wherever they could
 “ find them, by Force and Violence, which was
 “ contrary to the Universal Law of Nations.”

And therefore, such a rash Oath could not be lawful in itself, nor, consequently, of any Obligation upon

upon the Consciences of those who had so unadvisedly taken it ; as the *Israelites* themselves might rationally have discovered.

2. " THE Massacre of the People of *Jabesh-Gilead*, without once sending, to know the Reason of their absenting themselves from the War, was a cruel Expedient, to extricate the *Israelites* from a Difficulty, in which their superstitious Observance of an unlawful Oath had involved them ; and a sad Instance it is of the Iniquity and Barbarity of their Times. For,—certainly, to slay the Innocent with the Guilty, and to put Women and Children to Death, who were never made to bear Arms, was the very Height of Injustice and Barbarity ! "

3. IF this was done, in Pursuance of the other *Cherem*, or *great Oath*, whereby they might think themselves bound utterly to extirpate them ; with what Justice could they spare the *Four Hundred young Virgins*, any more than the rest of the Inhabitants ? For, it does not appear, that the Law gave them any Authority, to dispense with one Part of their Oath, more than another. And,

4. THAT other Expedient, to which they had Recourse, for procuring Wives to the Two Hundred *Benjamites* yet unprovided for, by a Rape of the *Virgins* of *Shiloh* (which Mr. *Whiston*, too softly, calls a *Sort of Violence and Rapine*) had not so much as the Colour of an Oath, or any other plausible Plea for its Excuse, but only that of the *Necessity of the State*, into which, by their own rash and resolute Misconduct, they had now brought themselves. For, the *Elders of the Congregation* had not any Authority, to dispose of other People's Children, without the Parents Consent and Approbation ; and, much less,

less, to give a Sanction to Rapes, or forced Marriages. But,

5. THO' the holy Scriptures relate the Facts nakedly, as they happened, without a Censure; yet the sacred Historian hath assigned a Reason for these and other unrighteous Proceedings; nothing, that in those Days there was no King in Israel; but every Man did that which was right in his own Eyes, without Controul! So that it becomes not us, to make Precedents of, or Apologies for, Actions, which, in themselves, are abominable, and will not admit of any reasonable Excuse. And therefore, upon the whole, we may fairly conclude,

6. THAT in such a Dilemma, when an Oath is taken, which cannot be performed without Sin, the true Casuistry is, to *repent* of the taking it; and not to pretend a *Reverence to an Oath*, how solemn soever in its Form, for the keeping it; since God (whose Oath it is) will severely punish those who proceed in Wickedness, to perform such an Oath, but will graciously pardon the truly penitent in his Breaking it.

§. VI. AND NOW, to attend Mr. *Whiston*, tho' beyond the Bounds of *Scripture Politics*; he says,

“ Another Example of the *Jews* inviolable Obser-

vation of an Oath of Fidelity, to

Whist. Scrip. “ even an Heathen Prince, during

Polit. p. 61. “ his Life-time, we have out of *Jo-*

“ *sephus*, in the Case of *Jaddus*, the High-Priest,

“ in the Days of *Darius*, the last King of *Persia*,

“ and of *Alexander* the Great, who conquered him.

“ The High-Priest had entered into a League with

“ *Darius*, and had confirmed it by

Jos. Antiq. “ an Oath. When therefore *Alexan-*

lib. xi. ult. “ *der* had conquered those Parts, and

“ sent

“ sent to the High-Priest, for his Assistance of
 “ Men, and that Tribute he before used to pay
 “ *Darius* ; his Answer was, that *he was under the*
 “ *Obligation of an Oath to Darius, and could not*
 “ *fight against him so long as he lived.* Which An-
 “ swer brought the Threatning of a War from
 “ *Alexander*, to teach them, to Whom they must
 “ keep the Oath of Fidelity, and by which they
 “ hazarded their own Liberties. Yet did God so
 “ eminently reward this Regard to an Oath, in
 “ *Jaddus* and the *Jews*, that he, in a wonderful
 “ Manner, preserved him and his Nation from
 “ Destruction, when this *Alexander*, instead of tak-
 “ ing away their Liberties and Privileges, con-
 “ firmed and increased them.”

THO’ this Story does not come here, properly,
 within the Compass of our present Undertaking,
 as standing only on the Authority of *Josephus*, I
 shall not dispute the Truth of it, but let it pass, as
 Mr. *Whiston* has stated it, observing,

1. THAT such an Answer was very well becom-
 ing the Character and Station of an *High-Priest* ;
 who could not but know the Allegiance due to
 Lawful Sovereigns, and the lasting Obligation of
 Oaths to them, even tho’ overthrown by their Foes
 in the Field, or *otherwise removed by*
Providence from their Government and See above,
actual Dominion ; as I have shewn, in §. ii. p. 16, 17.
 the Cases of *Manasseh*, and *Nebuchadnezzar*, and
 others. And.

2. THAT it is not material (tho’ Mr. *Whiston*
 seems to lay some Stress upon it) that *Darius* was
 an *Heathen Prince*. For, as it is an Orthodox
 Maxim, that *Dominion is not founded in Grace* ; so
 the Subjects Allegiance is not due to the Sovereign
 on account of his Orthodoxy in Religion, but of
 his inherent proper Right : Of which, an *Heathen*,

as such, cannot be deprived, with any better Authority or Reason by his *Christian* Subjects, than

the *Heathen Bulgarians* had, for Deposing their Sovereign, because he

was a *Christian* ! For, by the Laws, both of God and Nature, the Authority *even of an Heathen Prince*, is as sacred and inviolable, and his just

and proper Right as indefeasible, as those of a *Christian*, according to the

solemn Judgment even of the *Scots Presbyterian* Reformers themselves ;

in whose public *Confession of Faith*, this is one Article, That *Difference in Religion, or*

even Infidelity, does not take away the Right of the Magistrate. For (as a famous *Presbyterian* Author

fairly proves, from Scripture as well as Reason) "Obedience is owing to

"Princes, or Magistrates, without Condition of Religion, or Justice

"on their Part performed."

§. VII. " 'TIS true (says Mr. *Whiston*) we have one Example of the Non-performance of

"a solemn, but rash Oath ; I mean, in the Case of *Jonathan* ; yet, in such a Manner, that its

"inviolable Sacredness was preserved." The Case, in short, was this : *Saul*, in the Heat of his Pursuit of the flying *Philistines*, after a

signal Defeat, had rashly *adjured the People, saying, Cursed be the Man*

that eateth any Food until Evening,

that I may be avenged on mine Enemies !—But Jonathan heard not when his Father charged the People with the Oath : Wherefore he put forth the End

of the Rod that was in his Hand, and dipped it in an Honey-Comb, and put his Hand to his Mouth—

Upon this, when *Saul* went to ask Counsel of God,

but

Artic. xxiii.
concerning
the *Civil Magistrate.*

Exercitat.
conc. *Usurped Powers,*
1650, 4to,
P. 41.

Whist. Script.
Polit. p. 62.

1 *Sam. xiv. 24,*
&c.

but did not receive any Answer, he made Inquiry, by *Lot*, to discover, what and whose Sin had provoked the Lord; protesting, with a solemn Oath, *Though it be in Jonathan, my Son, he shall surely die!* And when the *Lot* fell upon *Jonathan*, the same Sentence was confirmed with another Oath. But here, *the People* interposing, and pleading the Innocence, as well as the Merit, of the gallant young Prince (to whom the Honour of that Day's Victory was chiefly owing) they are said to have *rescued Jonathan, that he died not.* Upon which Case, we may observe,

— *Ver.* 39.

— *Ver.* 44.

45.

1. THAT tho' Mr. *Whiston* says, This "Procedure is an amazing Demonstration of the Opinion there was then, of the sacred and inviolable Nature of Oaths;" it seems much more *amazing*, that he did not perceive the *Demonstration* to be clearly on the other Side. For tho' *Saul* himself (who was not a very expert Casuist) was of that *Opinion*; yet, we see, *the People* concluded, more discreetly, that such a rash and unreasonable Oath could not be performed with Justice, and therefore did not oblige to any Thing but Repentance.

Whist. *ibid.*

2. As to Mr. *Whiston's* Notion, that "the People would not consent to the Execution of that rash Oath by *Saul*, to which themselves had not agreed," it is plainly groundless. For, tho' no Subject can warrantably bind himself by an Oath, in any Matter which relates to the Rights of the Crown, without the *Consent* of his Sovereign, I think it is too great a Compliment to the *People*, to insinuate, as if the Sovereign could not validly bind himself by an Oath, without the *Consent* and *Agreement* of his Subjects. And,

Ibid. p. 63.

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3. IT

3. IT does not appear, that *Saul* himself, at that Time, “endeavoured to his utmost
Ibid. “to perform” *his Oath*, (as Mr. *Whiston* says he did :) Since *the People*, in that Case, neither pretended to any Authority to controul him, nor presumed to use any Force, but that of sound Reason and fair Arguments, to prevail with him to dispense with his own rash Oath : For, so it was, and by no other Means, that they rescued the innocent *Jonatban* ; and agreeable to this Sense is the original Word here rendered in the Greek Version of the *Septuagint*. 'Tis true indeed, the Text says, *The People said unto*
1 Sam. xiv. 45. *Saul, shall Jonathan die? — God forbid ! As the Lord liveth, there shall not one Hair of his Head fall to the Ground !*—But, considering the Innocence and Merits of the Prince, upon which they grounded their Plea, we may fairly understand the Form of their Swearing, to be a solemn Appeal, or calling God to Witness, that *Jonatban* ought not to be put to Death, since he had not done any thing deserving Punishment ; but, on the contrary, had, with God's Help, wrought great *Salvation* (or Safety) that Day in *Israel*. And, it is plain, that, if *Saul* had not been thus convinced of the Invalidity and Injustice of his own rash Oath, but had still thought himself obliged (and consequently *endeavoured to his utmost*) to perform it, he had Opportunities enough, every Day after this, to have put his Sentence in Execution upon *Jonatban*, by what Means soever *the People* had rescued him at that Time.

THESE are all the *Instances*, which Mr. *Whiston* has thought necessary to produce on this Occasion ; being (in his Opinion)
Whisl. Script. Polit. p. 63. “abundantly sufficient for *his present Purpose*.” Now, if his *present Purpose* was only

only to “demonstrate the great Obligation, that
 “lies on private Persons, to be good Subjects,”
 he might have spared much Pains; since *private*
Persons, how ill soever disposed, are generally
obliged to Submission, *for Wrath* (or Fear of Pu-
 nishment) if not *for Conscience-sake*. But, if he
 would extend the same *Obligation*, equally and a-
 like, to all Subjects, without Distinction of pub-
 lic or *private*, *to be good Subjects*, to their respective
 rightful Sovereigns, “even tho’ they are thereby
 “forced to submit to great Vexations and Cal-
 “mities,” I could heartily wish it to have the full
 Force of a *Demonstration* indeed. He grants, that
 “those, who, in a more public Ca-
 “pacity, act in the Name of *Ibid.*
 “the whole Community,” are under *no small Obli-*
gation to the same Duty of Subjection, since
 they “are under the same Bonds of an Oath of
 “Fidelity with the rest.” Now, methinks, he
 should rather have thence inferred, that those in
 such a *public Capacity* are under still greater *Obli-*
gations than those of *private Persons*, inasmuch
 as their Trust is greater; and consequently their
 Breach of Trust would be an heinous Aggravation
 of their Defection and Revolt from their due
 Allegiance. But, to talk (as here he does) of an
Obligation “to be good Subjects, to those whom
 “the Providence of God, and the public Consent
 “of a Nation, have made their Governors, espec-
 “ally where the Solemnity of an Oath has bound
 “their Consciences to such Subjection,” is so loose
 and uncertain a Way of *demonstrating* the proper
 Object of Allegiance, as will be more apt to per-
 plex the Understandings of some less subtle Men,
 than to solve the Scruples, and quiet the Consciences
 of any. For, as *the Providence of God* has been
 often misapplied, to Changes and Revolutions in

Government, which have been brought about by the manifest Violation of the Laws of Nature, as well as of God's exprefs Commandments : So the Heads of a meer Faction, when permitted to work themselves into Power, have, as often, appropriated to themselves the Sanction of Authority, and pretended to carry along with them *the public Consent of the Nation*; even to the *making* such *Governors*, as they, for their own selfish Ends, have artfully imposed upon their Fellow-Subjects, and *binding their Consciences to such Subjection by the Solemnity of Oaths* ! And yet, surely, a Designation to Government, by Priority of Birth, and Proximity of Blood, should be a clearer Indication of *God's Providence*, than a pretended *Demonstration* from any meer Events, or fortuitous Successes !

BUT, after all, it is no Wonder, that Mr. *Whiston* argues here so inconclusively, when he proceeds upon precarious Grounds, and false Principles; begging the main Question, which he ought to have clearly proved in the first Place : Particularly where he, without any Distinction, as-

Ibid. p. 56. asserts absolutely, " the Sacredness of
" *All* such Covenants, wherein a so-
" lemn appeal to God upon Oath had been once
" publickly made" ! — That it was the People, or

Ibid. p. 63. " those who, in a more public Ca-
" pacity, act in the Name of the
" whole Community, whose *Original* Consent gave
" the Title to the Supreme Magistrate" ! — That

Ibid. there is a " mutual *Contract* between
" the Supreme Magistrate and Peo-
" ple;" upon the *Breach* whereof (he seems to suppose) *the Obligation of Submission, even when it has been confirmed by Oath, is not in all Cases, indis-*

dispensable, especially to Part of the Legislature itself.
— That " when once a Nation, in its
Ibid. p. 64. " public Capacity, has, in this or any
Case,

“ Case, set aside one King, or Family, and set
 “ up another, the Duty of private Subjects is ever
 “ to own and obey that Person or Family accord-
 “ ingly”! — That in Case of *the King's Mal-admini-*
stration it seems “ to be not only those (*neighbour-*
ing) Princes Right, but *Duty*, to see that such
 “ innocent Subjects be freed from that his Oppres-
 “ sion and Tyranny, while they *leave* him, un-
 “ supported to them!” — And,
 “ That no Title of a King does, af- *Ibid.* p. 65.
 “ ter his Death, properly oblige to the Eldest Son,
 “ or even the same Family, without the free *Choice*
 “ or Recognition of a Nation!”

For these, and other Principles of the like Strain,
 Mr. *Whiston* refers to his *former* (*viz.*
 the Eighth) *Proposition*, which he *Ibid.*
 thinks to be *very clear in all the Bible*. But that
 Proposition has been so fully considered, and so
 clearly refuted already, (upon the
 Authority of *the Bible* itself) in the
 Book herein-before referred to, that
 I need not waste the Time, in Repe-
 titions, nor enlarge farther, in exposing the Ab-
 surdity of Conclusions drawn from such false or
 fallacious Premises.

See the *Short*
History of the
Regal Succes.

THE main Point, in short, is this; That in
 Hereditary Monarchies, this is an authentic Maxim,
The King never dies; meaning, that, according to
 the Laws both of God and Nature, so soon as the
 Breath is out of the Royal Father's Body, or he is
 pleased to declare his Abdication (or voluntary Re-
 signation) of the Government, his
 Eldest Son, or other *Next Heir*, does
 thereupon, *immediately*, commence
King, to all Intents and Purposes,
without the Ceremony or Solemnity of either *Corona-*
tion or Proclamation: And the *Consent* of the Peo-
 ple,

See the Procl.
 of K. *Cha.* II.
 in 1660.

ple, testified by their subsequent *Oaths*, gives not the least Addition to his *Title*; being only a solemn Assurance of their Fidelity and Allegiance, due unto him in virtue of his inherent Right. "All

Knight's Sermon. "the Homage we swear to give the
on *Hes. x. 4.* "King (or, as the Apostle says, to
in 1682. "Render him) is, and was, his Na-
tural Right; not founded in, but

"declared, and corroborated, by the Solemnity of
"an Oath: For, otherwise, how could he require
"and exact an Oath? This being a Portion of
"that Tribute which ratifies his Claim, and dou-
"bles the Security of his Title to the rest." So
far is Mr. *Whiston* from being supported by any
good Authority, for what is here last quoted from
him! Neither can it be truly said, that, in such a
Constitution, the People can be *freed from all Ob-*
ligations to Subjection and Obedience to their Right-
ful and Lawful Sovereign, unless it be (what sel-
dom happens) by a full and fair Conquest, in a
just and open War. How the Case may differ, in
Elective Governments, where the King holds his
Crown for Life only, or otherwise, under certain
Conditions and Limitations, by express Contract,
I shall not presume here to examine.

HAVING now considered the several CASES
which Mr. *Whiston* has thought fit to select, in
Support of his *Proposition*, concerning the Scrip-
ture-Doctrine of *Oaths*, &c. I hope, it may be
acceptable to the well-disposed Reader, for the
more full and perfect Illustration of the same most
important Subject, to accompany me, while I pro-
ceed to make an Inquiry, into all the other Cases
and Passages relating thereto, throughout the sa-
cred Records, with pertinent Remarks upon the
same, as Occasion offers.

CHAP. I.

The Scripture-History of OATHS and VOWS, LEAGUES and COVENANTS, before the Promulgation of the Law of God by Moses; and afterwards also, among those who were yet Strangers to that Divine Law.

§. I. **A**S Almighty God himself was pleased, at sundry Times, to enter into *Covenant* with Men; so did he condescend to confirm the same by such evident *Tokens*, as were sufficient to assure them of a punctual Performance on his Part, the more strongly to oblige them to the like Fidelity on their Part. Of this Sort we may reckon the two *Trees* set before our first Parents in Paradise; the one to assure them of *Life*, on the Condition of their Obedience, and the other of *Death*, in Case of their Transgression. In like Manner, after the epidemical Wickedness of the Old World had provoked his Justice, to destroy all its Inhabitants by an universal Deluge, except *Noah* and his Family, he was yet in Mercy pleased to *establish his Covenant with them*, that *the Waters should no more become a Flood to destroy all Flesh*: And, to confirm their Faith in his Promise, he declared *his Bow* (the *RAINBOW*) to be a visible *Token* of that *Covenant between him and the Earth*, to all *Generations*. To which also he was pleased, many Ages after this, to refer, as a solemn *Oath*, and a Type of the *Covenant of his Peace* sworn to his Church, which should never be removed. And more Instances, of the like kind, will be seen, in their proper Places.

§. II.

§. II. IN the mean time, we must take notice of the CURSE, which *Noah* pronounced upon an undutiful Son, for exposing and scoffing at *the Nakedness of his Father*; which had its Effect in the Destruction of the *Canaanites*. From whence we may learn, 1. What a dreadful Thing it is to despise or mal-treat our Parents (whether Natural, Political, or Spiritual;) being the ready Way to bring down and entail a *Curse* upon the Guilty, to the latest Posterity. And, 2. How cautious we ought to be, not to utter *Curses*, or Imprecations, rashly: For they are never vented in vain; but, when *causeless*, will surely return upon the Party's own Head who profanely useth them.

§. III. WHEN *Abram*, with his Followers, had rescued *Lot*, together with the Remains of the People and all the Goods, belonging to the King of *Sodom* and his Allies, out of the Hands of their Enemies, that Prince made a grateful Offer to his Deliverer, of *all the Goods*; which *Abram*, with equal Generosity, refused to accept of: *I have lifted up mine Hand unto the Lord*, — (said —xiv. 22, &c. he) *that I will not take any thing that is thine*, &c. Where we may observe, that this Phrase of *lifting up the Hand*, &c. is used to signify a solemn Form of Swearing, and appealing to *the Lord* of Heaven above, for the Sincerity of his Intentions, and the Truth of what he said; other Examples of the same Form also frequently occurring hereafter, in the Sequel of this Work.

§. IV. IN the Covenant which God made with *Abram*, we find that, to strengthen his Faith in the Promise of an *Heir*, &c. he condescended to give him a Sign or Token, according to the Custom in those Days, when the contracting Parties were wont to di-

Stackb. Hist.
Bib. fol. 220.

vide

vide the Beasts which on such Occasions were to be sacrificed, and then to pass between the Parts thereof so divided; signifying a Wish or Consent, that their own Bodies should be so cut asunder and divided, if they violated their Oath or Covenant then made.

Thus, when *Abram* had taken the Beasts which

God appointed him to offer, he *divided them in the midst, and laid each*

Gen. xv. 9, &c.

Piece one against another, and placed himself in the midst of them, (according to the Version of *he*

Septuagint) or passed between them, in Token of his Faith and Obedience: And the Lord *passed be-*

tween those Pieces, in the Appearance of a *smoking Furnace, and a burning Lamp*, as Emblems of his

Divine Presence. In Allusion to which antient Ceremony, the Word which we trans-

late *entering into Covenant*, doth, in

Deut. xxix.

12.

the original *Hebrew*, (noted in the

Margin) signify to *pass into Covenant*: And the same is also expressly mentioned by the

Prophet *Jeremy*, in the Case of *Zede-*

Jer. xxxiv.

18, 19.

kiah, herein after stated. Again, when

God renewed his *Covenant* with *Abram*, consisting

of an express Condition of Obedience on the one

Part, and a Promise of Protection

and Prosperity on the other, he was

Gen. xvii. 1,

&c.

graciously pleased to confirm the same

with a double Token; first by changing his Name

to *Abraham*, and then instituting the sacramental

Rite of *Circumcision*, as a Symbol and Seal of the

Covenant made with him and his Posterity. And

that the several *Covenants* made with *Abraham* were

solemnly ratified by *Oaths*, is evident from num-

berless Texts of Scripture, (too many to be here

recited) wherein God has expressly declared himself

mindful of *the Oath which he swore unto Abraham*,

namely, at the making those several *Covenants*.

§. V. Now we come to the *Covenant* which *Abimelech* made with *Abraham*. This King of *Gerar* (tho' himself a *Philistine* and
—xxi. 22, &c.

an Heathen-Idolater) perceiving, that *God was with Abraham in all that he did*, and fearing lest, in Time, he might become a troublesome Neighbour to him, or his right Heirs in Succession, came to him in Person, desiring to make a *League* of firm and lasting Peace and Friendship between them, and to confirm the same by their mutual Oaths; to which *Abraham* readily agreed, and both of them made a *Covenant* accordingly. To which (tho' somewhat out of the Order of Time) we may

here properly subjoin that other *League*
—xxvi. 26, &c. afterwards made, or renewed, between another *Abimelech* (probably the Son of the former) and *Isaac*, in the same Place, and with the like Circumstances. From both which Cases we may conclude, 1. That it is lawful to make *Leagues*, or Treaties of Peace, with Princes of a different Communion, and even with Idolaters; and that the *Oaths* made to confirm the same, are valid, obligatory, and indispensable. And further 'tis well observed, 2. "That the aforesaid *Father*
" of the Faithful, and by whose Bosom Heaven is
" represented, and who had the Honour done him
" by Holy Writ, to be called the *Friend of God*;
" and by the Chronological Writers of memorable

Sir P. Pett's
Obligat. to the
King's Heirs,
&c. 1689. fol.
311.

" things to be called *Inventor Fæderum*—did make that first Alliance
" with an idolatrous Prince, and with
" his whole Race of Idolaters in Prof-
" pect." For so 'tis plain from the
Text, 3. That *Abraham's* fæderal
Oath to *Abimelech* was not merely Personal, but
extended to his Son, and his Son's Son, in their
due Course of Inheritance.

§. VI. The next that occurs, is the Case of *Eli-
ezar*, the Steward of *Abraham's* Household, whom
his Master bound by an Oath, when -- xxiv. 2. &c.
he sent him into *Mesopotamia*, to take
a Wife unto his Son *Isaac*. From whence we learn,

1. That it is not only lawful, but a Duty incum-
bent upon Inferiors in general, to take an *Oath*, on
any just Occasion, when required by the Authority
of their lawful Superiors: And yet, 2. That we
ought first, thoroughly to enquire into the Na-
ture and Obligation of the Oath, and be fully sat-
isfied, both that we lawfully may, and that it is
in our own Power to perform it, (ac- -- ver. 5. and 39,
cording to the prudent precaution of
the conscientious Servant in the case before us;)
or otherwise by no Means submit to take it. And
here also we may observe, by the way, 3. That
whatever Form of Words may be used, or with
what Ceremonies soever accompanied, if it be such
as fairly implies an Appeal to God for the Truth
of what we say, 'tis formally and properly an *Oath*.
Thus, *Abraham's* Servant put his Hand -- ver. 2. and 9.
under the Thigh of his Master, and
swore to him concerning that Matter; by that Cere-
mony referring to the Covenant of Circumcision, as
well as shewing his Subjection to his Master's
Authority.

§. VII. NEXT to this we find the Case of *Esau*
and *Jacob*, when the Elder Brother -- xxv. 29 &c.
sold his Birthright unto the Younger
and swore unto him, to bind the Bargain. 'Tis
true, the Price paid for it was, of itself, far short
of an Equivalent, or valuable Consideration for so
great a Prerogative; but, when we consider *Esau's*
Circumstances at that time, when he was faint, and
at the point to die, insomuch that he judged the
Birthright could not be of any Profit to him (and
therefore he despised it) we must admit, that the

Sale was valid, and the Oath which *he sware*, for the Confirmation of it, was binding upon him, how ungenerous soever we may think his Brother, for insisting upon such rigorous Terms.

§. VIII. AFTER this, when *Jacob* was on his Journey towards *Mesopotamia*, and had seen the Vision of the *Ladder* at (the place which he therefore called) *Bethel*, (that is to say, *the House of*

—xxviii. 20, *God*) he *vowed a Vow*, saying, *If God will be with me, and will keep me,*
&c. *in this Way that I go, and will give*

me Bread to eat, and Raiment to put on, so that I come again to my Father's House in Peace: Then shall the Lord be my God, and this Stone which I have set for a Pillar, shall be God's House; and of all that Thou shalt give me, I will surely give the Tenth unto Thee. Where we may observe, 1. That, tho' this

is the first express Mention of a *Vow*, in the holy Scripture, yet we cannot reasonably doubt, but the same thing in Effect was done before; both by *Abraham*, who, in the several Covenants which

See §. IV. p. 32. *God made with him*, must necessarily be understood to have promised and vowed to perform the *Conditions* on

his Part, in order to obtain the Benefit thereof; and also by *Isaac*, who, when he *intreated the Lord*

Gen. xxv. 21. *for his Wife, because she was barren*, must be supposed to have made a like

Vow, of some suitable Acknowledgment for the Blessing he prayed for: And this the rather too, because the Original Word (which we there render to *intreat*) signifies a Solicitation for Favours, with Gifts, *Vows*, or Promises. 2. That the *Vow* here made was not so precisely conditional, as if *Jacob* did not intend to bind himself to the Performance of it, unless God would grant him what he desired; and much less was it the Effect of any Distrust of the Promises, which God had so often repeated to

his

his Fathers and himself: But it was indeed the Effect of a true Faith, and a grateful Confidence, that, as he was fully persuaded, that God would not fail on his Part of the Promise; so he, in devout Thankfulness, promised, that, when the Time should come, he would perform on his Part, what is here particularly *vowed*. 3. That the conditional Part of his *Vow* was Humble, Modest, and Pious; beseeching God to be with him, and protect him, in his Journey and Return, and to prosper him with a competent Supply of the Necessaries of Life. 4. That the Matter of it also was not only just and lawful in itself, but a religious Duty; devoting himself to God's Service, and the Tenth Part of his Substance to pious Uses, according to the Example of his Grand-Father, the faithful *Abram*. 5. That so acceptable was this his pious *Vow*, that God was pleased to declare his Approbation of it, twenty Years after this, and to comfort him, under his fresh Discouragements, with this endearing Address, *I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the Pillar, and where thou vowedst a Vow unto me, &c.* And, 6. That he did perform his *Vow* accordingly, at *Beth-el*, when he returned thither, after his Interview with his Brother *Esau*. — xiv. 20. — xxxi. 13. — xxxv. 6, 7.

§. IX. THE next Case we meet with, to our present Purpose, is the *Covenant* made between *Jacob* and *Laban*; when, after much Expostulation, they mutually *swore* (each of them by the God whom he adored) to confirm a lasting League of Friendship, before they parted. Wherein we may observe, 1. That, as before, in the Covenants with *Abimilech*, the making Leagues and Contracts with Idolaters, is well warranted by the Example of all these three great Patriarchs, — xxxi. 44. &c. See §. V. p 34.

triarchs, *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. 2. That such Contracts, and the Oaths by which they are confirmed, are valid and obligatory: "Because,

Sanderf. of
Oaths, Lect.
V. §. 3.

"otherwise, there would be no convenient Means, whereby Leagues might be made, and public Faith and Peace preserved with Idolaters.

"Nor doth the true God any where forbid the good Use of Faith, though wickedly sworn by false Gods." Neither do we, by this Means, partake with the Idolater, in the Evil of his Sin, but in the Good of his Contract, whereby he engageth and performeth his Faith; as St. *Augustine* hath determined, in the Case before us. 3. That the Oath which was here sworn by *Jacob*, is expressed by the Fear of his Father *Isaac*: Which Form of Words, means no other than the true God, who was the sole Object of his Father's Fear and Worship; to which the Prophet *Isaiah* seems

to allude, where he says, *Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your Fear, and let him be your Dread*. And, 4. That, as, in those Covenants with *Abimelech*, the Place where they were solemnly ratified was called *Beer-sheba*, (that is, *the Well of the Oath*;) So in this with *Laban*, a Pillar, or Table of Stone, was erected, as a Memorial, to witness the Solemnity of their Covenant.

§. X. Now we come to a Covenant, which being entered into, by both Parties, upon Motives unwarrantable, had woeful Effects also upon both. During *Jacob's* Residence among the *Shechemites*, his Daughter *Dinah* was defiled by

Gen. xxxiv. 2.
&c.

Shechem, the Son of *Hamor*, the Prince of the Country. But nevertheless, being much enamoured, and desirous to make all the honourable Amends in his Power, the young Prince

pre-

prevailed with his Father to solicit, that he might have *the Damsel to Wife*. To that End no fair Offers or Conditions were omitted on his Part. But her Brethren answered them *deceitfully*, under Colour only of Difference in Religion; promising their *Consent*, if all the Males of *Shechem* would be *circumcised*. This Condition was no sooner performed, than two of her Brethren, *Simeon* and *Levi*, treacherously fell upon them, *when they were fore of the Wound, and slew all the Males*; taking the Women *Captives, and spoiling the City*. Whence we may learn, 1. That the Occasion of all this Tragedy was the young Prince's Gratification of a disorderly Passion. 2. That the Sons of *Jacob* prostituted an holy Sacrament, and Ordinance of God, making Religion a *Cloke of Maliciousness*, and Conscience a Cover for premeditated Mischief! 3. That the *Shechemites* consented to the Terms proposed, not upon any Principle of Religion, but of meer Self-Interest; being persuaded, that they should thereby become Masters of all the others *Cattle and their Substance*. 4. That such a Trans-action, being thus faithless and injurious, could not be reasonably expected to conclude better than this did, in a Massacre of one Side, — xlix. 7. and a *Curse* on the other! To which

we may add this seasonable Reflection of a pious and learned Prelate, 5. That "here is the Policy, " or rather Subtilty, which now in " our Days we see so rife. If Malice Bp. Babingt. on this Text. " possess us and wish a Revenge, if " Covetousness have caught us, and would have " a Benefit, or whatsoever it is we would effect, " still the Pretence is a *Public Good*! Thus and so " shall the Church be profited, and thus and so " shall the Land be enriched, if our Devices may " have Place; when indeed they tend to as much " Good

“ Good to either, as this Persuasion did to the
 “ *Sechemites*. — Trust not therefore over-hastily
 “ such goodly Promises and painted Shews of pub-
 “ lic Good, to bring in an *Innovation*, which, as
 “ this, may have Danger under it, and yet not
 “ doubted.”

§. XI. THE next we are to consider is the Case
 of *Joseph*; whose Words to his Brethren are va-
 riously interpreted. In his magisterial Examination
 of them, before he discovered himself to them,
 he charged them, as if he had suspected them to
 be *Spies*; and, by way of Purgation, peremptorily
 insisted upon their producing their youngest Bro-
 ther. *By the Life of Pharaoh* (says he)

*Gen. xlii. 15, 16. ye shall not go forth hence, except your
 youngest Brother come hither. Send*

*one of you, and let him fetch your Brother;—or else,
 by the Life of Pharaoh, surely ye are Spies!* Where
 some think, *Joseph* had learned the Language of
Pharaoh's Egyptian Courtiers, who were accus-
 tomed to swear by their King's Life, as the *Heathen
 Romans* afterwards did by the Genius of their Em-
 perors. Others judge more favourably, that he
 only complied with that Form of Swearing, on this
 particular Occasion, the better as yet to conceal
 himself from his Brethren, under the Person of an
Egyptian. But, the most fair and candid Con-
 struction of the Words, is to understand them, as
 if he had only said, *As sure as Pharaoh lives, ye
 shall not go;—ye are* (or deserve to be treated as)

Spies: In which plain and natural
Sanderf. of Sense, the Words are not “ formally
Oaths, Lect. v. “ an Oath, but an Affirmation ra-
 §. 7. “ ther, confirmed by a vehement
Gen. xliii. 3. “ Obtestation,” or a solemn Protesta-

tion; as *Judab* understood it, according to his Re-
 port of the Case to their Father. Agreeable to
 which

which also we may fairly understand that Phrase, *As thy Soul liveth*, or, *As my Lord the King liveth* (made use of by *Hannah, Abner, David, Abigail, Uriah*, the wife Woman of *Tekoah, Ittai the Gittite*, and *Elisba*) when used alone, not to be an Oath, nor the Person to swear who so useth it : Tho' we sometimes find it added to, or joined with another Clause (as in some of these Instances here cited) thus, *As the Lord liveth*, and *As thy Soul liveth*; the former of which is undoubtedly to be accounted an Oath.

1 Sam. i. 26.
 — xvii. 55.
 — xx. 3.
 — xxv. 26.
 2 Sam. xi. 11.
 — xiv. 19.
 — xv. 21.
 2 Kings ii. 2.
 &c.

§. XII. WHEN the Time of *Jacob's* Death drew nigh, he took an Oath of his Son *Joseph*, to bury him, with his Fathers, in the Land of Promise, and charged all his Sons likewise to the same Purpose; which was punctually observed.

Gen. xlvii. 29,
 &c.
 — xlix. 29,
 &c.

Where we may take Notice, 1. That the Oath here taken by *Joseph* was in the same Form and Ceremony, with that which *Abraham* required of *Eliezar*. And, 2. That, when *Joseph* asked *Pharaoh's* Leave to perform it, so sacred and inviolable was a lawful Oath then held to be, even by the meer Light of Nature, that *Pharaoh* readily assented, saying, *Go up, and bury thy Father, according as he made thee swear*. But it must nevertheless be observed, 3. That, in case *Pharaoh* had disallowed it, and refused his Consent, the superior Authority of the lawful Sovereign would have superseded the private Authority of the Father, and consequently have rendered the Oath void, and of no Obligation.

See §.vi. p. 35.
 Gen. 1. 4, &c.

§. XIII. *Joseph* himself also took an Oath of his Brethren, concerning his own Funeral; which we may observe, did

— Ver. 25.

not bind themselves only, who took it in their own Persons, but their late Posterity also. *Exod. xiii. 19.* For it was many Ages after this, before his *Bones* were carried out of *Egypt*, and buried according to his dying Directions. *Job. xxiv. 32.*

§. XIV. THE next we meet with, in the Order of Time, is holy *Job*; who, in Vindication of himself against the unjust Censures of his *miserable Comforters*, made a solemn Appeal to God for his Integrity: *Behold*, (said he) *my Witness is in Heaven, and my Record is on high*; which was formally and properly an Oath.

§. XV. WHAT a due Regard and Reverence was paid to the Solemnity of an Oath, by *Rahab* of *Jericho*, (who as yet was a Stranger to the Law of God) appears by her requiring the *Spies*, to *swear unto her by the Lord*, for her Safety and Protection, in the Destruction of that City: And, how punctually it was performed on their Part, will be observed hereafter in its proper Place. *Job. xvi. 19.*

§. XVI. THE like appears also in the Case of the *Gibeonites*; who, tho' not acquainted with God, or his Law, had Recourse to a subtle Stratagem, to procure a *League* with his People, and that confirmed by an Oath; which hath been considered herein-before at large. *Josh. ii. 12.*

§. XVII. WHEN the Widow *Naomi* returned from the Land of *Moab*, *Ruth*, one of her Daughters-in-Law (who was of that Country, and not yet a Profelyte to the *Jewish Law*) would not be persuaded to stay behind, as the other did, but solemnly sware, by way of Imprecation, *The Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but Death part thee and me!* *Intro. §. ii.* *p. 7, &c.*

§. XVIII

§. XVIII. WHEN *Goliath* saw such an unequal Match (as he looked upon *David* to be) advancing to fight him, the proud *Philistine* *disdained him, and — cursed him* 1 Sam. xvii. 42, 43. *by his Gods!* But his Blasphemies of the true God, and *Curses* of the Innocent, returned (as they commonly do) upon his own Head, and had their Effect in his Destruction.

§. XIX. WHEN *Saul* himself went in Disguise to consult the Witch at *Endor*, she was afraid, lest it had been a Design to *ensnare* and put her to Death, till he solemnly *swore to her* — xxviii. 9, 10. *by the Lord*, that she should incur no Danger by it; and then her Fear was at an End. From whence we may observe, That an *Oath* was held so sacred, in those Days, that even the most wicked Persons would entirely rely upon it, and venture their very Lives upon the Credit of it.

§. XX. AND it was the same Confidence in *David's* Oath, which prevailed with the poor *Egyptian* Servant, to conduct him in the Pursuit of the *Amalekites*, who had plundered and burned *Ziklag*. — xxx. 15.

§. XXI. WHEN royal *David* was suddenly driven into Exile, by the Usurpation of his unnatural Son, perceiving *Ittai*, the *Gittite*, among the small Train of his faithful Followers, he advised him to return, as being a *Stranger*, and not under the Ties of natural Allegiance to him. But the gallant Man was so far from forsaking an injured Prince in Distress, that he generously answered, with a solemn Oath, *As* 2 Sam. xv. 21. *the Lord liveth, and as my Lord the King liveth, surely, in what Place my Lord the King shall be, whether in Death or Life, even there also will thy Servant be.* And accordingly, — xviii. 2. we find him among the principal

Commanders, intrusted with the glorious Enterprize of subduing the Usurper, and restoring the injured King to his just Rights.

§. XXII. HERE we may take Notice of the

Luke iv. 26.

1 Kings xvii.

10, &c.

poor Widow of *Zarephath* (or *Sarepta*) a City of the *Sidonians*, to whom *Elijah*, the Prophet, was sent of God, to be sustained, in the Time of a great Drought and Famine. When the Prophet asked her to bring him a little Water and a Morsel of Bread, she readily went to fetch it; but solemnly protested (in the Form of an Oath) *As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a Cake, but an Handful of Meal in a Barrel, and a little Oil in a Cruse, &c.*

§. XXIII. AMONG the many other Enormities which complete the Character of the wicked *Abab*,

1 Kings xvi.

31.

one of the first (and which contributed not a little to the rest) was his unlawful Marriage with *Jezebel*, the Daughter of *Eth-baal*, King of the *Zidonians*. Which

— *xviii.*

19, &c.

Jezebel no sooner heard, how the Prophet *Elijah* had miraculously confuted and destroyed her favourite Prophets, the Priests of *Baal*, but she sent him this Message, *So let the Gods do to me,*

— *xix. 2.*

and more also, if I make not thy Life as the Life of one of them, by To-morrow about this Time! Where 'tis not easy to determine, which was greater, the Wickedness of the Oath, or the Folly of the Message. Had not her bloody Rage rendered her now as void of Reason, as she was of good Conscience, she must have considered, that such an Oath was not only unlawful in itself, but, after such Warning given, would be out of her Power to perform: Nay, she must have seen the Finger of God Almighty in what his Prophet had so evidently demonstrated, and been convinced

of

of the Error of her heathenish Idol-Worship. However, her Imprecation did not prove vain: Tho' it had no Effect upon the Prophet, yet it rebounded, with full Force, upon her own devoted Head, when *God did so to her, and more also*; and that too, according to his Divine Judgment denounced by the Mouth of the same Prophet *Elijab*, and punctually executed by the Hand of *Jebu*, raised up for that very Purpose. And so likewise,

— xxi. 23.
2 Kings ix.
30, &c.

§. XXIV. WHEN *Ben-badad* II. King of Syria, took Occasion to quarrel with *Abab*, and was encouraged, by *Abab's* mean Submission, to rise in his Demands, to Terms which could not be complied with, he brake out into the like Imprecation, *The Gods do so unto me, and more also, if the Dust of Samaria shall suffice,*

1 Kings xx. 10.

for Handfuls for all the People that follow me!

But, Almighty God was pleased to interpose, and stop him in his Career: Tho' not out of Regard to *Abab*, (who had sold himself to work

Evil in the Sight of the Lord) but to humble the other, and to make them both, in their Turn, to know, that

— xxi. 20,
25.
Dan. iv. 37.

those that walk in Pride he is able to abase. And thus, *Benbadad*, after two signal Defeats, was glad

to sue for a Covenant with *Abab*,

upon Terms as dishonourable to *Damascus*, as those which he had designed to impose upon *Samaria*: And, at last, his own Imprecation had its Effect

1 Kings xx. 31,
&c.
2 Kings viii.
15.

(as may generally be observed in the like Cases) upon himself, in a sudden and unnatural End.

§. XXV. THE next, in the Course of Time, to be considered here, is the Case of the Prophet

Jonab;

Jonah; of whom we read, that, when instead of going, with God's Message, to *Nineveh*, he had embarked on a contrary Voyage, *there was a mighty*

Jan. i. 4, &c. *Tempest in the Sea, so that the Ship was like to be broken.* In which Dis-

treſs, tho' the Mariners were Idolaters, and of different Nations (as appears by their *crying every Man unto his God* whom they severally worshipped) yet, when they saw, and understood the Occasion

— Ver. 16. of the Tempest, and by what Means

it was miraculously appeased, they feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a Sacrifice unto the Lord, and made Vows of Obedience to him.

§. XXVI. WHEN *Sennacherib*, King of *Aſſyria*, came up, with a formidable Army, against *Hezekiah*, he sent three of his principal Officers, to in-

vest *Jerusalem*, insult the King, intimidate the People, and outrageously

to blaspheme the Most High God; as if it were a vain Thing to put their

Trust in him for Deliverance! which Message was followed by a Letter of

the like blasphemous Contents. The good King made no Answer; but immediately

addressed himself, by Fasting, Mourning, and Prayer to God, and a Mes-

sage to his Prophet *Isaiab*; not doubting, but the Almighty would

avenge himself of the Blasphemy, and deliver those who trust in him, *that all the King-*

doms of the Earth might know, that He is the Lord God, even he only. And accordingly, the Angel of

the Lord went out, and smote, in the Camp of the *Aſſyrians*, an Hundred Fourscore and Five Thousand;

and *Sennacherib* himself was slain, by two of his own Sons, at the Foot of the very Idol which he

worshipped!

§. XXVII.

§. XXVII. THOSE Words of *Abasuerus* to his Queen *Esther*, promising to grant her Petition, and perform her Request, *Esth.* v. 6. even to the half of the Kingdom, may ——— vii. 2. be understood in the same Manner, as if they had been confirmed with a solem Oath; being of the same Import with *Herod's* to (*Salome*) the Daughter of *Herodias*, which is *Matth.* xiv. 7. expressly called a *Promise with an Oath.* *Mark* vi. 23. And, that *Abasuerus* himself looked upon it as no less obligatory, appears by his ready and punctual Performance of *Esther's* just and reasonable Request. But, as to that of *Herod*, it shall be particularly considered in its proper Place. Chap. v. § ii.

THUS have I set forth the History of Oaths and Vows, Leagues and Covenants, before the Promulgation of the Law of God by Moses, and afterwards also, among those who were yet Strangers to that Divine Law, throughout the Canonical Scriptures of the *Old Testament*. After which I shall proceed, in the same Subject, and like Manner, with Respect to those who were more immediately under, and acknowledged the Obligation of the said Law. In the mean Time, 'tis necessary to set forth that Law itself, distinctly, in one View, with relation to the Matter in hand, as here next followeth.

C H A P. II.

The LAWS of GOD, promulgated by MOSES, in relation to OATHS and VOWS, LEAGUES and COVENANTS.

§. I. **H**ERE, in the first Place, we must observe the Commandments which God himself gave to his People on Mount *Sinai*; where-
of the Third is this, *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain.* From whence we are to learn, 1. That the Prohibition of doing it *in vain*, fairly implies the Lawfulness of *Oaths*, taken on just and solemn Occasions, as well as the Duty of taking such, when they are required by a lawful and competent Authority; for the Proof of which also we have divers Examples and exprefs Precepts in the holy Scriptures, here taken notice of in their proper Places. 2. That this Prohibition is properly to be understood both of *false Swearing* and *profane Swearing*. 3. That an Oath is false, if we either swear to the Truth of any Thing, which we do not, at the same Time, certainly *know* to be true; or if we promise upon Oath to do any Thing which we have any probable Reason to *doubt* is in itself unlawful, or impracticable, or which we do not sincerely intend to perform, according to the plain Sense and Meaning of the Words. 4. That, if the Matter of such a promisory Oath be lawful, we are guilty of Perjury, if we do *not perform* it, to the utmost of our Power: But, if it be unlawful, we are doubly guilty

guilty if we *do* perform it. 5. That, in such an unhappy Case, our Duty is, heartily to *repent* of the taking the Oath, but by no Means to add Sin to Sin, by thinking ourselves under any Obligation to perform it. So that, 6. An Oath, which cannot be *performed* without Sin, cannot be *taken* without Sin. And, 7. That *God's Name* is also *taken in vain*, by rash, and inconsiderate Swearing and Cursing, too common in ordinary Conversation, and even in Games and Diversions, when profane Men (as a grave Prelate expresseth it) “not content to swear

Bp. Andrew's
Serm. fol. 707.
Edit. 1661.

“by Him whole, dismember him,
“and pluck in Pieces, that they
“may have Oaths enough!” Which being a blasphemous Abuse of that *holy and reverend Name*, is therefore expressly forbidden in this Commandment, under the severest Denunciation of God's Judgments upon all those who, any way, presume to *take his Name in vain*! For, (according to a Figure of Speech, frequently used in Scripture,) this is the proper Import of that Phrase, that He *will not hold him guiltless* who dares to do it. And here we must observe, also, That, whereas some Men might be tempted to change their Religion, and comply with idolatrous or other immoral Worship, when commanded by Authority, for fear of ruining themselves or their Children and Posterity, it pleased God, in the Second Commandment, to assure them, that they should not save any Thing by such their worldly Policy; for he would *visit* their Sin *upon their Children, unto the third and fourth Generation*: And, in like Manner,

“because some may think, they may
“get some great Gain or Profit, some-
“times, by swearing falsely; therefore
“God sets a great Penalty upon this

Bp. Andrews,
on the Com-
mandments,
1650, p. 157.

H

“Sin,

“ Sin, to let them know, they shall gain nothing
 “ by the Bargain : — When Men think to save
 “ themselves from some Danger, by *taking God's*
 “ *Name in vain*, they shall find, that That shall
 “ be their Destruction, which they thought would
 “ preserve them !”

§. II. AND, as our Tongues are thus laid under
 Restraint, with respect to *God*, by the Third Com-
 mandment, so are they, by the *Ninth*, under the
 like Restraint, with respect to our
Exod. xx. 16. Neighbour, from *bearing false Witness*,
Deut. v. 20. or suborning others to do the same,
 whether it be for, or *against our Neighbour*. And,
 how heinous a Sin this is, will be declared by and
 by.

§. III. NEXT to these, which are Moral, fol-
 lows the Judicial Law, concerning *Money* or Goods,
 delivered into a Neighbour's Custody, and *stolen*
 from him, or otherwise *lost* or *hurt* : The Law says,
Exod. xxii. 8, If the Thief be not found, then the
Master of the House shall be brought
unto the Judges, to see whether he have
put his Hand unto his Neighbour's Goods : — Then
shall an OATH of the Lord be between them both,
that he hath not put his Hand unto his Neighbour's
Goods ; and the Owner of it shall accept thereof, &c.
 From whence we learn, That the lawful Magistrate
 has Authority, *ex officio*, to put the Party accused,
 in such Cases, to his *Oath* : For otherwise, *no Man*
seeing it, it would be impossible for him to make a
 right Judgment in the Cause, and consequently
 impertinent to trouble him with it.

§. IV. WHERE we are forbidden to *raise a false*
Report ; — to be an unrighteous Witness ; — to wrest
Judgment, &c. “ it is very observa-
Tillotf. Serm. “ ble, that it is particularly in the
on Heb. vi. 16. “ Matter of OATHS and PERJURY,
 “ that

“ that the Holy Ghost gives that Caution, *Thou*

“ *shalt not follow a Multitude to do* *Exod. xxiii. 2.*

“ *Evil.*” From whence also we may

learn, 1. That it is no Excuse, that false, rash, and profane Swearing are become fashionable; but it will be a great Aggravation of our own Guilt, so far as we, by our own Practice, contribute to render it still more fashionable and exemplary. And, 2. That the Caution here given doth plainly imply, that the *Multitude*, or Majority, may be (as, by Experience, we find they often are) in the wrong; and therefore, not to be *followed*, in any Practice or Proceeding, which tends to do Evil.

§. V. NEXT to these, we come to the Judicial Law against concealing of Evidence, and the Atonement necessary to be made by the guilty Person.

If a Soul sin, and bear the Voice of *Lev. v. 1.*

Swearing, and is a Witness, whether

he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his Iniquity: That is, If, being

adjured, or demanded to answer upon Oath, concerning what he hath seen or heard, he do not utter the Truth, he is guilty of Perjury. Nay,

moreover; “ If any shall hear one

“ swear, that either he hath not had, *Bp. Babington*

“ or hath not done, what he (upon

“ his own Knowledge) understandeth he hath had,

“ and hath done; if he testify not what he know-

“ eth, and reveal not the Iniquity of the other

“ that hath so falsely sworn, he shall be guilty of

“ his Sin. Where you see, and ought ever to

“ remember, that not only he *takes the Name of*

“ *God in vain*, which sweareth falsely, but even he

“ also that winketh at the same false Oath, being

“ able to reprove him, and zealously doth not his

“ Endeavour to have that Abuse of God's Name

“ punished, by revealing and making it known.
 “ A Law that toucheth us nearly, as the World
 “ goeth now ; Men wholly preferring many Times
 “ their Affection to their Friends, before all the
 “ Glory of God in this Behalf! So likewise,

§. VI. *If a Soul swear, pronouncing with his Lips*
 Lev. v. 4. &c. *to do Evil, or to do Good, whatsoever*
it be that a Man shall pronounce with
an Oath, and it be bid from him ; when he knoweth
of it, then he shall be guilty in one of these. And—
he shall confess, that he hath sinned in that thing :
And he shall bring his Trespass-Offering unto the Lord
for his Sin, &c. Where we must observe, 1. That
 this Law extends to all sorts of *Oaths*, Affertory
 and Promisory, rash or deliberate, whether volun-
 tary or by way of solemn Adjuration before a law-
 ful Magistrate: Even to *whatsoever a Man shall*
pronounce with an Oath ; or, by Parity of Reason,
with a Vow. 2. That if the Matter of the *Oath*, or
Vow, happens to be doubtful, or *bid from him*, at
 the Time when he made it ; yet, *when he knoweth*
it, and discovereth his Error, he must not add
 more Sin to it by a Performance, but is bound to
confess it, and make an Atonement. And, 3. That
 tho’ the *Atonement* prescribed in the *Levitical Law*,
 be not now in force, yet the Obligation upon Con-
 science is nevertheless valid ; viz. to wash away the
 Sin by an hearty Repentance towards God, and to
 manifest the same, by making all the Satisfaction
 and Reparation in our Power towards Men.

§. VII. THEN follows another Law, That when
 a Man is conscious that he hath wronged another
 — vi. 2. &c. of his Right or Property, by *Swearing*
falsely, he shall not only make full
Restitution of all he hath so unjustly got, to the in-
 jured Party, or his right Heirs, but *shall add the*
fifth Part more thereto, together with a Trespass-Of-
fering

fering unto the Lord, in order to an *Atonement* for his Sin. From whence we may learn, 1. That God will never be pleased with our formal Sacrifices or Prayers, nor accept of any *Offering* at our Hands, so long as we unjustly detain, and refuse or neglect to *Restore* to the right Owner what is not ours but his. And, 2. That the *Atonement* here required, is not so heavy and rigorous, as that in *Exodus* xxii. Because there the Offender, being convicted before the Magistrate, was to be condemned in a greater Penalty; but here the Punishment is lighter, because the Confession is free and voluntary: For so the Words which we translate *hath sinned, and is guilty*, should rather be translated *hath sinned and acknowledged his Guilt*.

See §. 3. p. 50.

Lev. vi. 4.

§. VIII. IN the Repetition of sundry Moral Laws, for the maintaining Justice and Truth, without which all Societies must be broken up and dissolved, we meet with these, *Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another: And ye shall not swear by my*

—xix. 11. 12.

Name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the Name of thy God; I am the Lord. Where 'tis remarkable, 1. How nearly these Sins are related one to another; that of coveting other Mens Goods or Estate being the common Source of all the rest. For, as this is a Temptation to Theft and *false Dealing*; so these are too often productive of *Lying*, in order to their better Concealment; and consequently of Perjury and *Profanation of the Name of God* for the Confirmation of their suspected Credit. This was the Ground of *Agur's* Prayer against Poverty, lest he should be tempted to *steal*, and thereby engaged in Perjury: And thus also are the *Thief* and the *false Swearer* joined together, as equally obnoxious to the

Prov. xxx. 8. 9.

Zech. v. 3. 4.

the same *Curse*. And, 2. That those Words, *I am the Lord*, intimating the absolute Authority of God over all his Creatures, have the Force of a Denunciation of the Divine Vengeance, against all those who presume to commit this daring Sin.

§. IX. AFTER this we find the Law made, *ex post facto*, for the exemplary Punishment of *Blasphemy*. When *the Son of an Israelitish*

Lev. xxiv. 10.
&c.

Woman, whose Father was an Egyptian, — blasphemed the Name of the

Lord, and cursed, he was committed to safe Custody, till God himself pronounced his Sentence; since there was not yet any express Precept given in that Case. And that Blasphemer was not only stoned to Death, by God's immediate Command, but this was made a standing Law for the future, Whosoever

---ver. 15. 16.

curseth his God shall bear his Sin: And he that blasphemeth the Name of the

Lord, he shall surely be put to Death, and all the Congregation shall certainly stone him: As well the Stranger, as he that is born in the Land, when he blasphemeth the Name of the Lord, shall be put to Death. But now (alas!) so common is the Crime, that all the Stones in our Streets would scarce suffice to punish the shocking Blasphemies and Curses daily echoing in them, and that too with Applause (shall I say?) or at least with Impunity! This how-

Jer. xxiii. 10.

ever, we may say, with Assurance, in the Words of the Prophet, Because of

Swearing the Land mourneth!

§. X. THE next to be considered, is the Law made concerning that which is called a *Singular Vow*, some of the People were touched (it seems) with such a quick Sense of the Divine Promises and Threatnings, delivered by *Moses*, that, out of extraordinary Zeal, they were forward to devote themselves, or their Children, Cattle, Houses, or Lands,

Lands, wholly, to the Service of God in the Tabernacle. But, God himself, having otherwise made sufficient Provision for all Parts of that Service, was here graciously pleased to give *Moses* particular Directions for the Regulation of all such *singular*

Lev. xxvii. 2, &c.

Vows, by an *Estimation* to be made *by the Priest*; so that a certain Rate or Value in Money was to be paid to the Priest, and employed by him for holy Uses, by way of *Redemption* of the Person or Thing so devoted. *Notwithstanding, no devoted Thing that a Man shall devote unto the*

---ver. 28. 29.

Lord, — shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord: None devoted, which shall be devoted of Men, shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to Death. But, after all, we must understand this last (which the *Hebrews* call the Law of *Cherem*) to extend only to wicked Persons or Things, devoted to Destruction by the express Command of God, (as were the *Amalekites*, and other Nations of *Canaan*, and the Cities of *Jericho* and *Ai*, &c.) but by no Means to the Innocent; as I have had Occasion already to note, in the Case of *Jephtha's* Daughter.

Exod. xvii. 14, &c.

Numb. xxi. 1. &c.

Josh. vi. 17. &c. — viii. 2. &c.

Introd. §. i. p. 4.

§. XI. NEXT to this we come to the Law prescribed for the Trial of *Jealousy*, when a married Woman was suspected to have been *defiled*: Whereby, among certain appointed Ceremonies, *the Priest* was obliged, in order to a Discovery of the Truth, to *charge her with an Oath of Cursing*; to which the Woman was to say *Amen! Amen!* From whence a Right Reverend and Learned Casuist took Occasion to make a solemn Determination of these following Points of

Numb. v. 19, &c.

Con-

Andrews de
Jure-jurando
ἐπὶ δόξῳ,
Theol. De-
term. inter
Opusc. posth.
1629.

Controversy, 1. That an *Oath* may lawfully be required. 2. That any lawful Magistrate, as well Ecclesiastical as Civil, may lawfully require an *Oath*. 3. That such Magistrate may lawfully require an *Oath* of a suspected Criminal. 4. That when such a Magistrate requires an *Oath*, the Subject is bound to take it, in any Cause, or Question, which is not capital; or, at least, what does not affect Life, Limb, Liberty or Scandal. And, 5. That this may lawfully be insisted on, either for settling the true State of the Question, or in order to discover the true Merits of the Cause. All which several Points he clearly demonstrated by many express Texts of Holy Scripture; very proper and necessary to be considered at large, by those especially, who have been so loudly clamorous against the old *Oath Ex OFFICIO*.

§. XII. THE next in our Way is that which is called the Law of the *Nazarites*; who, over and above the common Prescriptions of the Law, dedicated and separated themselves, by a particular *Vow*, to the Service of God, in a peculiar and extraordinary Manner. These laid themselves under certain Restrictions (mentioned in this Chapter) for a certain Space of Time: And their *Vow* being duly accomplished, they were to offer their *Offering* unto the Lord, as here prescribed, and thereupon were absolved by the *Priest*. But, besides these, there were others (as *Sampson* and *Samuel* were) so consecrated unto the Lord, by their Parents, from the *Womb*; whose *Vow* was binding during their whole Lives; of all which we shall meet with Examples in their proper Places.

§. XIII.

§. XIII. Now we come to the general Law relating to *Vows*; *If a Man vow a Vow unto the Lord, or swear an Oath, to bind his Soul with a Bond, he shall not break his Word; he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his Mouth.* Where we must observe, 1. That a *Vow* to God is of the same Nature as a Promise made to Man; but of much greater Solemnity. 2. That a *Vow* differs from an *Oath*, as the former is properly a deliberate Promise made unto God of something which may be acceptable to him; either in Hope of Mercies to come, or in Return for some Mercies received: Whereas the latter is an Invocation of, or Appeal to, him, as the Witness of the Truth, or Avenger of the Falshood, of what we affirm or promise, to Man. 3. That they are therefore equally binding upon the Conscience, provided the Party be capable of *binding himself with* such a sacred *Bond*. For, 4. Here are certain Exceptions, expressly declaring the Invalidity and Nullity of *Vows* (how lawful soever the Matter thereof may appear to be) when made by Persons who have not competent Authority — Ver. 3, &c. so to do: Such as a Daughter, unmarried, *being in her Father's House in her Youth*; and a Wife under the Authority of her *Husband*; and, by Parity of Reason, a Son under the Authority of his Father, and a Servant or Subject under that of his Master or Sovereign. None of these can lawfully and validly bind themselves, either by *Vow* or *Oath*, in respect of any Matter, wherein their Father, Husband, Master or Sovereign, is properly concerned in Interest or Authority (as I have intimated above) without the Knowledge, Approbation or Assent of such their respective Superior; and much less, if he *disallows*

Intro. §. 1.
p. 6.

I

it:

it: For, if such Superior, so soon as it is made known to him, does not declare that he *disallows* it, his Silence may then be supposed to imply Consent, and the *Vow, or Oath, shall stand*. But, 5. As these Exceptions do confirm the general Rule,

—Ver. 9. so it follows here expressly, That every *Vow of a Widow, and of her that is divorced, wherewith they have bound their Souls,* (supposing the Matter of it to be lawful and practicable) shall stand against her; because such Women are wholly in their own Power,

Rom. vii. 2. and loosed from the Law of their *Husbands*: And tho' they might be *Lev. xxii. 13.* returned to their Father's House, to live with him, as in their Youth, yet here, 'tis plain, they might validly dispose of themselves and their own Goods, by *Vow* or otherwise, without any Necessity of the Father's Consent, Allowance, or Approbation.

§. XIV. In the next Place we are to consider that Precept of the Law, *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his Name*. Which, *Dent. vi. 13.* tho' it be of Moral Obligation, upon all Persons, *—x. 20.* at all Times, and in all Places, yet, as to so much of it as relates to our present Purpose, we must observe, 1. That its primary Intention was to caution the *Jews* against the Practice of other Nations, who were wont to *swear by the Names* of their false Deities; and is therefore not so properly a new Precept, as a Correction of an old Heathen Custom, with respect to the Object of their Oaths.

2. That it is not required as a necessary and indispensable Duty, in the same Sense as those of *fearing the Lord, and serving him*, to which it is subjoined; but as a Direction how to perform it, when lawfully called upon, for some great and necessary Purpose of Human Society; viz. with due Fear and

and Reverence of God's holy *Name*, and in order to promote his Honour and *Service*. 3. That, when just Occasion requires, we must not *swear* by any Idol, nor by Heaven, or Earth, or any Creature (for none of these are capable of being the proper Object of an Oath;) but only by the sacred *Name* of the Omniscient God; tho' to *swear* by any of his Divine Attributes is as much an Oath, as to *swear* by his proper *Name*. For, 4. 'Tis requisite in him, by whom we swear, that he should both know the Heart, whether or no we speak the real Truth, and also be able to revenge himself upon us, if we presume to call him to witness any Falshood: But both these Requisites are incident to God alone, and not to be ascribed to any other; for it is He only who *searcheth the Heart, and tryeth the Reins, even to* Jer. xvii. 10. *give every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings.*

§. XV. THE next that occurs is this; *If a false Witness rise up against any Man, Deut. xix. 16, to testify against him that which is &c. wrong:—Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his Brother; so shalt thou put the Evil away from among you.* From whence we may learn, 1. How abominable in the Sight of God *false Witnesses*, and Informers, are. And, 2. What an *evil* and dangerous State those Nations and People are in, where such vile, mercenary, and abominable Wretches pass, not only with Impunity but Encouragement. For (as Solomon very fully and most elegantly expresseth the destructive Nature of this heinous Sin) *A Man that beareth false Witness against his Neighbour, is a Maul, and a Sword, and a sharp Arrow;* Prov. xxv. 18. *Tillotf. as before.* “intimating, “that, among all the Instruments of Ruin and “Mischief that have been devised by Mankind,

“ none is of more pernicious Consequence to Human Society than Perjury, and Breach of Faith: *Psal. xci. 6.* “ It is a *Pestilence that usually walketh in Darknefs*, and a secret Stab and Blow, against which, many Times, there is no Possibility of Defence.”

§. XVI. THEN follows this other, relating to the Performance of Vows; *When thou shalt vow a Vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: For, the Lord thy God wilt surely require it of thee: But, if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no Sin in thee.* Where we must observe, 1. That this Precept is not of any Force, but on Supposition, that the Matter of the *Vow* be both lawful and practicable, as well as made by a Person free from any other's controuling Authority. 2. That if no particular Time be specified and expressed for the Performance of it, the Party is bound to set about it without the least Delay; lest he should afterwards become less able, or willing, or perhaps forget, to do it. And, 3. That we should therefore be very cautious, not to make any *Vow* rashly, and without due Deliberation, lest we should thereby incur the Guilt of Sin by not performing it; whereas we do not run that Hazard while we *forbear* to make it.

§. XVII. AND lastly, To add the greater Sanction to all these Laws, *Moses*, just before his Departure, set before them a full View of the manifold and great *Blessings*, to which they would be entitled by *Obedience*, and the many and grievous *Curses*, which they would incur by *Disobedience*. And moreover, he called them together, to renew their *Covenant with the Lord*; all which is heartily recommended (at large, to the Reader's serious Perusal and Application.

C H A P. III.

The Scripture History of OATHS and VOWS, LEAGUES and COVENANTS, under the Law of GOD, promulgated by MOSES.

§. I. **T**HE Case of the Son of *Shelemoth*, who was guilty of *Blasphemy and Cursing*, comes in properly here, as happening after the first Promulgation of the Law: But, as it gave Occasion to the making a new Law, *ex post facto*, it has been considered already, in its proper Place; and therefore needs not any further Enlargement here.

Lev. xxiv. 10, &c.

Chap. ii. §. ix. P. 54.

§. II. THE next was upon the *evil Report*, which was brought back by ten of the twelve Men, who were sent to *spie out the Land of Canaan*. This raised such an outrageous Mutiny in the Camp, as provoked the Lord to denounce, (and that with an Oath) that none of them should *come into the Land*, except *Caleb* and *Joshua*. Which was afterwards remembered by *Caleb*, in the Allotment of their respective Inheritances, when he claimed his Right, in virtue of what *Moses* (he says) *swore on that Day should be his Inheritance, and his Childrens for ever*. The Use I would make of which, is only to prove, by the Example of *Moses*, and even of *God* himself, (here, and in many other Places of Holy Scripture) that *Swearing* is well warranted, on just and solemn Occasions; and that all *Oaths* are not unlawful, as some *Fanatical Zealots* do pretend they are.

Numb. xii. 32.

—xiv. 21. 28.
Deut. i. 34. &c.
Numb. xxxii. 10, &c.

Josh. xiv. 9.

§. III.

§. III. NEXT to this, in Time, is the Vow of the *Israelites*, when King *Arad* the *Canaanite* (or as some call him, the *Canaanite King of Arad*) attacked and surprized some of them in their March,

viz. That they *would utterly destroy their Cities*; which they performed accordingly: Tho' it was not in their Power so to do, till some time afterwards, when this *Cherem* (or great Curse) was executed upon them, under the Command of *Jeshua*.

Numb. xxi. 1.
&c.

Josh. xii. 14.

Numb. xxii. 5.
&c.

2. Pet. ii. 15.

Jude 11.

Numb. xxiii.
11.

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§. IV. WHEN *Balaam*, the Prophet, was sent for by the King of *Moab*, to curse the *Israelites*, tho' he loved the *Wages of Unrighteousness*, and was greedily affected with the promised *Reward*, it pleased the Almighty, so to over-rule his corrupt Will, as to force him, instead of pronouncing a *Curse*, to *bless them altogether*. From whence we may learn, 1. That it is impossible (as *Balaam* himself did acknowledge) for any Man's *Curses* to reach those *whom God hath not cursed*. And, 2. That when men are so wicked and presumptuous, as, any way, to *take the Name of God* in their Mouths, to answer their own politic and selfish Ends, "and, in the pur-

Stackb. Hist.

Bib. fol. 505.

"suit of their corrupt Views, will follow their own Ways, notwithstanding many kind Hints and Admonitions to the contrary, God then abandons them to their own Imaginations; which in the Event very frequently prove their Ruin;" as

Num. xxxi. 8.

Josh. xiii. 22.

we find this Practice did to *Balaam*, who was slain at last, among the rest whom the Children of *Israel* slew with the Sword.

§. V.

§. V. AND now we come to the Case of *Rabab*; whose Reverence for an Oath has been taken Notice of already. But here we must further add, That the *Spies* of *Israel* having sworn to preserve her and all her Household, from the general Destruction of *Jericho*; when that City was taken, she, and all that she had, were brought out and preserved, in respect to the Oath, by *Joshua's* express Order. Where it is observable,

Chap. i. §. xv.
P. 42.
Josh. ii. 12. &c.
—vi. 22. 23.

1. That the Appellation of an *Harlot* is improperly applied to *Rabab*; since the Original Word admits of a more inoffensive Construction, signifying an Inn-holder, or any one who keeps an House for the civil Accommodation of Travellers; and indeed, it is more reasonable, as well as more decent, to interpret it in the Favour of one, whom the Holy Ghost has not only placed in the List of the *Faithful*, but also reckons her justified by this very *Work* here under our own Consideration. And, 2. That according to an antient Tradition in the Eastern Nations, these *Spies* changing their Habits, as if they had come from a distant Country, did thereby impose upon the People of *Jericho*, and obtain their Ends in viewing the Place: so that, if this be true, it was just, that they, who thus imposed upon these *Canaanites*, should themselves, in like manner, be imposed upon by those of *Gibeon*.

Heb. xi. 31.
Jam. ii. 25

§. VI. WHEN *Joshua* had taken *Jericho*, it was not only accursed, and consequently, as such, utterly destroyed with Fire; but he moreover denounced a solemn Curse upon the Man, who should ever presume to rebuild it: And this was actually and literally inflicted, above 500 years afterwards, upon *Hiel*, the *Beth-elite*; who laid the Foundation

Josh. vi. 17. &c.
1 Kings xvi 34.

there-

thereof in Abiram, his First-born, and set up the Gates thereof in his youngest Son, Segub, according to the Word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua, the Son of Nun. Whence we may learn, 1. That tho' a Curse causeless, and rashly made, shall return (without any other Effect,) upon the profane Head which utters it: Yet, when denounced by Authority, and upon a just Cause, it will surely be-

Chap. i. §. ii.
P. 32.

fall the Devoted Person; as we may remember that of *Noah* did upon the Posterity of *Canaan*, as well as this in the Case before us. And, 2. That, if to incur the *Curse* of an Earthly Superior be of so dreadful Consequence, what then have not those to dread, from the Most High God, who, either by taking false and unlawful Oaths, or breaking lawful ones, or otherwise by profane Cursing and Swearing, incur the Guilt of *taking his Name in vain*, against whom he has denounced such, and so many, tremendous Curses, and inevitable Judgments, throughout his sacred and infallible Word.

§. VII. IN like manner, *Joshua* having adjured all the People, not to take and reserve to themselves any thing that was thus either devoted to Destruction, or consecrated unto the Lord, a perjurious and sacrilegious Violation thereof caused the Anger of the Lord to be kindled against them, so that they could not stand before their Enemies: And *Achan* being, by Lot, detected of that Guilt, *Joshua* adjured the Criminal to give Glory to God, by making an ingenuous Confession of what he had done; which he confessed accordingly. From whence we may infer, 1. That, if those, who, being adjured, confess the Truth, do thereby give Glory to God, then those, who either conceal the Truth, or assert an

Josh. vi. 18,
19.

— vii. 1 &c.

— ver. 19.

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an Untruth, must consequently be guilty of the most provoking Impiety and Contempt of God's holy Name, as if they either thought themselves capable of deceiving his Omniscience; or, else, that he could not, or would not, effectually revenge it! And, 2. That since one *Achan*, by his single Violation of the Lord's Oath, troubled the whole Host of *Israel*, to that Degree, that the Lord would not be with them any more, till they had destroy'd him; and his Wrath fell on all the Congregation, and that Man perished not alone in his Iniquity; woe be to that People or Nation, where the like crying Sins escape with Impunity, and a profane Abuse of God's Name and Word becomes modish and epidemical!

§. VIII. THE next Case, to our present Purpose, is that of the Covenant which the Princes of *Israel* made with the *Gibeonites*. But, as that has been fairly stated and considered already, among the Instances produced by Mr. *Whiston*, we need not repeat it here.

§. IX. NEXT we come to a Misunderstanding, which was timely rectified among the Tribes of *Israel* themselves. The Occasion was this: When *Moses* had led them with Conquest to the Banks of the River *Jordan*, the two Tribes of *Reuben* and *Gad*, and the Half-Tribe of *Manasseh*, abounding in Cattle, petitioned to have their Portion on this Side, as being commodious for Pasture: And *Moses* granted their Request, on Condition of their assisting their Brethren in the Conquest of the rest of the Land beyond *Jordan*; which they duly performed. But, when they were honourably dismissed by *Joshua*, and repassed the

Josh. xxii. 20.

Josh. xxii. 20.

Introd. §. ii.
P. 7.

Numb. xxxii.
1.
Deut. iii. 12,
&c.

Josh. i. 12, &c.
xxii. 1,
&c.

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River to their allotted Inheritance, they *built there an Altar*, near the Place of their former miraculous *Passage*, not for any religious Worship, but only as a lasting Monument and Testimony of their Relation to, and religious Union with, the Tribes on the other Side of the River. This alarming the other Tribes, they prepared for *War against them*, as Schismatics, or Apostates from the true Religion. But, wisely resolving first to send an honourable Deputation, to expostulate with their Brethren, the

— Ver. 22. Case was cleared, the Truth confirmed with a solemn Appeal to God (*The Lord God of Hosts—he knoweth, &c.*) and the opening Breach was happily made up. From whence we may learn, 1. That when good Men are unjustly accused, or suspected, of any Crime they may lawfully (but with due Reverence) appeal to God, the Searcher of Hearts, in Testimony of their Innocence; as these, and many others also did, whom we meet with throughout these sacred Records. But then, 2. We must be extremely cautious, never to invoke, or make use of that holy Name, on any light Occasion; and, much less, in an unjust (or even a *doubtful*) Case: For, that would be the Way to add Blasphemy to Unrighteousness, and render us still more obnoxious to the Wrath of God, as well as to the Contempt of good Men.

§. X. THE next which occurs, is the Covenant which *Joshua*, not long before his
— xxiv. 1, Death, gathered all the Tribes of Israel
— &c. to make, or renew, before God in Shechem; putting them in mind of the wonderful Things which God had done for them, and their Obligation therefore to *serve* him, and him only. Where we may observe, That *Joshua*
— Ver. 26, took a great Stone, and set it up in the
27. Place, for a standing Monument, to

perpetuate the Remembrance of the Covenant there made, and (as it were) to *be a Witness* against them, whenever they should fail of performing the Conditions thereof on their Part; as had been formerly done, particularly in the *Covenant* between *Jacob* and *Laban*.

Chap. i. §. ix.
P. 37.

§. XI. WHEN God raised up *Gideon*, to deliver his People out of the Hands of the *Midianites*, he was pleased to confirm his Covenant with a gracious Token; sending Dew upon his *Fleece of Wool* only, when all the Earth beside was dry; and again making it dry upon the *Fleece* only, when there was Dew on all the Ground. And,

Judg. vi. 37.
&c.

§. XII. WHEN the same *Gideon* revenged the Slaughter of his Brethren upon *Zebab* and *Zalmunna*, he swore, *As the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you*.

— viii. 19.

§. XIII. THE next is the *Covenant* between *Jephtha* and the Elders of *Gilead*, when they sued unto him in their *Distress*, to become their Head and Captain against the *Ammonites*.

Judg. xi. 5,
&c.

But he, having formerly been very unkindly treated by them, prudently refused to engage with them, till they confirmed their Offer to him with a solemn Oath, saying, *The Lord be Witness between us, if we do not so, according to thy Words*. But,

— Ver. 10.

§. XIV. As to the rash *Vow*, which the same *Jephtha* made unto the Lord, when he undertook the Command, it has been considered already; being one of the Instances produced by Mr. *Whiston*.

— ver. 30, &c.
Introd. §. i. p. 3.

§. XV. THE next remarkable, is the Case of *Sampson*; whose Mother, having been sometime *barren*, was comforted by an *Angel* with the Promise of a Son, and express Instructions to breed him a *Nazarite* to God, from the Womb, to the Day of his Death, according to the Vow of a *Nazarite*, mentioned in the Law. Among other Rites peculiar to that Vow, there had not come a Razor upon his Head, till through the repeated Importunities and artful Insinuations of his treacherous and corrupt *Delilah*, he was so unguarded, as to discover to her wherein his great Strength lay, and thereby to put himself in her Power, by shaving off his Hair, to deliver him up, enfebled and weak like any other Man, into the Hands of his mortal Enemies. From the whole we may conclude, That *Sampson's* extraordinary Strength “depended indeed on the Covenant made between God and him; the Sign of which Covenant was his Hair: And, therefore, when — he suffered his Hair to be cut off, he broke the Covenant with God; and, forfeiting the Spirit of Strength and Courage, was left to his own natural Weakness, and so became an easy Prey to his Enemies. But—making fervent Supplications to God, for Pardon of the Violation of his *Nazaritism*, he renewed his Vow; and, so being restored to the Condition he was in before he lost the Favour of God, his Strength began to grow and increase, in Proportion as his Hair did.” In the mean time, after divers of his great Exploits against the *Philistines*, we find him, for some Time, retired to the Top of a Rock, in the Tribe of *Judah*.

Judg. xiii. 2,
Ec.

Chap. ii. § xii.
p. 56.

Judg. xvi. 16,
Ec.

Stackb. Hist.
Bib. fol. 606.

Judg. xvi. 22.

— xv. 8, Ec.

Judah; whereupon the revengeful *Philistines* made an hostile Incurſion, in Purſuit of him. And now, ſo mean-ſpirited were the Men of *Judah*, as to deliver up to them the Man whom God had expreſſly raiſed up, and inſpired with Strength and Courage to *begin to deliver* Iſrael — xiii. 5. *out of the Hand of* thoſe insulting and tyrannizing Foreigners! With this baſe Intention, no fewer than *three Thouſand* of them aſcended the Rock; and, upbraiding him with *what he had done* to provoke the *Philistines*, — xv. 11, &c. (as if thoſe Tyrants had been indeed the lawful and rightful *Rulers over* them!) declared their Reſolution to *deliver him up, bound, into the Hand of* the common Enemy. Tho' this was enough to fill the generous *Hero* with Indignation, yet he, ſcorning to expoſtulate with ſuch a ſervile and daſtardly Crew, made not the leaſt Reſiſtance; but only required of them to *ſwear unto him, that they would not fall upon him themſelves*. Which plainly ſhewed, that his inſiſting on their *Oath*, was in Contempt of their baſe Ingratitude, and not in *Fear* of their Power; ſince, 'tis evident from the Sequel, that he could have diſengaged himſelf from them, as eaſily as he did from the *Philistines* to whom they betray'd him.

§. XVI. THE next in Place (tho' ſuppoſed to have been ſomewhat earlier in Time than the two foregoing) is the Caſe of *Micah*; whoſe *Mother*, having loſt *Eleven* — xvii. 2, &c. *Hundred Shekels of Silver*, is ſaid to have *curſed*, or uttered dire Imprecations, upon the Perſon who had taken them: Which had ſuch Effect, that her own Son, touched with Remorſe, confeſſed and *reſtored* them to her. And this is underſtood to be ſuch an *Adjuration*, by her own Authority, as laid the ſame Obligation upon all her

her Family, to discover the Theft, as if they had severally taken an *Oath* so to do; of which there are divers other Examples in Scripture.

§. XVII. AFTER this, in the Course of the History, we meet with two several *Oaths*, which the other Tribes of *Israel* had sworn, in their Prosecution of the *Benjamites*. But this being also one of the Cases produced by Mr. *Whiston*, has been fairly stated, and fully considered already.

§. XVIII. WHEN *Ruth* was made known to *Boaz*, he promised to perform the Part of a Kinsman to her, and confirmed his Contract with the Oath, *As the Lord liveth!* which he performed accordingly.

§. XIX. AND now we proceed to the Vow which *Hannab* made, That, if the Lord would give her a Son, then *she would give him unto the Lord all the Days of his Life, and there should no Razor come upon his Head*. This was what is called the Vow of a *Nazarite*; and was punctually performed, after the Birth of *Samuel*, according to the Law. But we must observe, That it was done with the free Consent and Approbation of her Husband; without which her Vow had not been valid nor obligatory.

§. XX. THE next is *Eli's* Adjuration of young *Samuel*, to discover what the Lord had revealed to him. *God do so to thee, and more also, (said he) if thou hide any Thing from me, of all the Things that he said unto thee!* Whereupon *Samuel* (tho' otherwise loth to declare the Divine Judgments denounced against

against *Eli* and his House) immediately told him every whit, and bid nothing from him.

§. XXI. WHEN *Nabash* the *Ammonite* had besieged *Jabesh-Gilead*, and refused to grant the inhabitants any Capitulation, but on — xi. 1, &c. this Condition, that he might thrust out all their right Eyes, and lay it for a Reproach upon all *Israel*! They, in their Distress, were forced to make a seeming Submission, provided they could not find any to relieve them within seven Days. In the mean Time, having received Assurance from *Saul*, that he would relieve them, they made a Promise to the Besiegers, over-night, saying, *To-morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you*; but carefully concealed the Hopes they had of Succour so nigh at Hand. By which Stratagem, they made the Enemy less upon their Guard; when they made a Sally, early on the Morrow, and came out unto them indeed, but with Sword-in-Hand, while *Saul*, with his Forces, fell upon them on the other Side, and utterly defeated them.

§. XXII. WHEN *Samuel*, grown old, made his Appeal to the People, in the Presence of their new King, for a Testimony of his own Integrity, it was by way of solemn Adjuration; — xii. 3, &c. *Behold, here I am*; (says he) *witness against me before the Lord, &c.*—*The Lord is Witness, &c.*—And they answered, *He is Witness.*

§. XXIII. THE next in Course, is *Saul's* rash Adjuration, and Oath, in the Case of his Son *Jonathan*; which has been — xiv. 24, &c. sufficiently considered already, among *Intro. §. vii.* the other Instances produced by Mr. *p. 24.* *Whiston*, and therefore needs not to be repeated here.

§. XXIV.

§. XXIV. WHEN *David* advanced to fight *Goliath*, he had so firm a Confidence

1 Sam. xvii.

45, &c.

in the Goodness of his Cause, and in the Lord of Hosts, (whose Cause it was) that he was not in the least dismay'd at the

Ch. i. §. xviii.

P. 43.

Giant's unequal Bulk, and horrid Blasphemies, but proceeded with Assurance, in the Name of the Lord; whose Divine Providence returned all the Curses upon the profane Head which had uttered them, as we have already noted.

§. XXV. Now we come to the Covenant made between *Jonathan* and *David*. After the Overthrow of *Goliath*, we read, That the

1 Sam. xviii.

1, &c.

Soul of *Jonathan* was knit with the Soul of *David*, and *Jonathan* loved him as his own Soul. — Then *Jonathan* and *David* made a Covenant — And (as a public Manifestation

— ver. 4.

thereof) *Jonathan* stript himself of the Robe that was upon him, and gave it to *David*, and his Garments, even to his Sword, and to his Bow, and to his Girdle. In Pursuance of which Covenant, that faithful and gallant young Prince did not only use his Interest in his Father

— xix. 2, &c.

— xx. 1, &c.

— xxiii. 16, &c.

— xx. 8, &c.

— 16, 17.

— 42.

— 31.

— xxiii. 17, 18.

for the Benefit of *David*; but, from Time to Time, gave Notice to his Friend, of all his Father's Intentions to destroy him, and concerted with him the Means of his Safety. Yea, so inviolably was this Covenant observed, (which was solemnly confirmed by mutual Oaths, several Times

repeated) that, altho' *Jonathan* well knew *David's* Succession would defeat him of the Crown which his Father wore, yet he solemnly renewed his Covenant with him; preferring his League of sworn Friendship before all self-interested Views of Em-

pire:

pire: So wonderfully does the KING of Kings bring about the wise Ends of his Divine Providence; sometimes even by Means and Instruments from whom there is not the least Reason to expect it! Nor was *David* less observant of the same Covenant, on his Part; as appears by this his diligent Inquiry afterwards, *Is there yet any that is left of the House of Saul, that I may shew him Kindness, for Jonathan's Sake?* 2 Sam. ix. 1, &c.

§. XXVI. AND here we find, after several outrageous Attempts of *Saul*, upon the Life of *David*, and the generous Intercession of *Jonathan* in the Behalf of his worthy Friend, that *Saul* swore, *As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain*: Yet, nevertheless, after this, he hunted his Life, and sought by various Ways and Means, to slay him. So that, whether he swore that Oath to *Jonathan* in Subtilty, hoping that his Friend would thenceforth be less upon his Guard, or in Sincerity of Heart, at that Time; 'tis certain, if he was not also guilty of Perjury, in swearing deceitfully, he was, at least, guilty of it, in the Violation of a just and lawful Oath, by endeavouring, as he afterwards notoriously did, to slay him.

§. XXVII. NEXT to this, we are to consider *David's* Oath to *Saul* himself. After that King was evidently convinced, how *David* (whom he, with the most deadly Malice, persecuted,) had refused to hurt him, when it was in his Power, and he was earnestly persuaded and pressed to kill him, he acknowledged his own Ingratitude to him: And, being made sensible withal, that *David* was surely to succeed him in the Kingdom, he required of him to swear, that he would not cut off his Seed after him, nor destroy his Name out of his Father's House; and —xxiv. 21, 22.
—xx. 15.

David sware unto him accordingly, as he had, in Effect, done before, in his Covenant made with *Jonathan*. Whence ariseth this Question, How *David* acquitted himself of the Obligation of this

Oath, when he afterwards delivered
 2 Sam. xxi. 6, *seven of Saul's Sons and Grandsons*
 &c. into the Hands of the *Gibeonites* to be

hanged? For the Solution of which it is generally answered, 1. That *David's* Oath here to *Saul* must necessarily be understood to have been *conditional*, on Supposition of their future good Behaviour.

2. That another Condition must always be implied, in such Cases; that is, provided God did not give any special Command to the contrary.

3. That *David* was religiously minded to keep his

— iv. 12. Oath, so far as it was in his Power; as appears by the Punishment which

he inflicted upon those who had slain *Ishbosheth*, the Son of *Saul*, (tho' his Rival in the Throne;) and

— xxi. 7. his sparing *Mephibosheth*, the Son of

Jonathan, the Son of *Saul*, because of the Lord's Oath that was between them; tho' Reason of State, and the Security of his Throne, might otherwise have moved him strongly to the contrary.

And, 4. That his delivering some of that Family into the Hands of the *Gibeonites*, was according to

the express Will of God, For, when
 — ver. 1, &c. there was a Famine — three Years —

David inquired of the Lord; who did not only return him Answer, that it was for *Saul*, and for his bloody House, because he slew the *Gibeonites*, but (as *Josephus*, and others, do reasonably conclude) did, at the same Time, direct him to make an Atonement, by giving this Satisfaction to the *Gibeonites*, which they demanded.

§. XXVIII. NEXT we find, how *David*, being justly incensed by the Ingratitude of the churlish

Nabal,

Nabal, made a solemn Oath or Vow, that he would not leave, of all that pertained to him,
— any that pissed against the Wall: 1 Sam xxv. 22.

Yet, nevertheless, upon the reasonable and discreet Address of *Abigail*, (*Nabal's* Wife) *David* did not only suspend his Vengeance, but *blessed* her, the happy Instrument, who had kept him

from coming to shed Blood, and from — ver. 33.
revenging himself with his own Hand. Upon which

Case a learned Divine argueth, very soundly, thus;

“ A rash *Vow* and *Oath* (for the same

“ Reason is for both) are better bro-

“ ken than observed. The Reasons

“ are these: The *End* of an *Oath* is

“ to bind us more straightly unto God's Service,

“ to perform some Duty unto his Glory: There-

“ fore it is a Part of God's Worship and Honour,

“ to be sworn by: Then, by an *Oath* we cannot

“ bind ourselves to do any thing, whereby God is

“ dishonoured. Again, the *Breach* of an *Oath* is

“ therefore unlawful, because it is done with Con-

“ tempt of God, whose Name is called upon: But,

“ when an unlawful Oath is broken, it proceedeth

“ from the Fear and Reverence of God. Beside,

“ Two Sins are worse than one: And therefore

“ we are bidden, not to join two Sins together;

“ for, one Sin shall not go unpunished: But,

“ when an unlawful and unjust Oath is kept, there

“ is a double Sin committed; first, in the rash

“ making of such an Oath; and then, in the un-

“ godly performing of it. 2. But yet, this must

“ be acknowledged, That, tho' it be better to re-

“ verse an unlawful Oath, than to perform it, (as

“ both *Jephthab* had done better, if he had chang-

“ ed his *Vow* concerning his Daughter, and *Herod*

“ his *Oath* touching *John Baptist*;) yet, it is an

“ Offence also, to make a rash *Oath*, as *David*

Willet's 16th
Quest. on this
Chapter.

“ here committed that Oversight : But it is better,
 “ the *Oath* being once made, by Repentance to
 “ heal that Sore in reversing it, than to make the
 “ Wound greater in effecting it.” To which
 may be added (in the elegant Expressions of a

Life of King
David, vol. 1.
 p. 172.

celebrated Modern) 3. That tho’

“ in a Word, the Resolution against

“ *Nabal* was the Resolution of a

“ *Mortal*, not to say a *Military* Man,

“ too much injured and provoked, and urged by

“ Necessity and Self-preservation ; the Change and

“ the Thanksgiving, upon being averted from the

“ Evil, were the Sentiments of an *Hero*, and a

“ *Saint*.”

§. XXIX. THE next is, when *David*, finding
Saul asleep in his Camp, and was pressed by *Abiathar*
 for his Consent to slay him ; using Mr. *Whiston*
 modern Argument, for a *Providential Removal* and
Deliverance ! God (said he) *hath delivered thine*
Enemy into thine Hand this Day ! now therefore, let
me smite him, &c. But *David* (who was under the
 better Direction of Divine Politics) not only re-
 fused it with Abhorrence, but professed his steady
 Reliance on God’s Providence for his Advance-
 ment, without the Use of any unlawful Means on
 his Part to hasten the Revolution. *As the Lord*

1 Sam. xxvi.
 8, &c.

liveth (said he) *the Lord shall smite*

him, or his Day shall come to die, or

he shall descend into Battle and perish.

The Lord forbid, that I should stretch forth mine
Hand against the Lord’s Anointed ! And, in the
 same solemn Terms also, he called upon *Abner*,

—ver. 16.

and the rest of the sleeping Train,

swearing, that *they were worthy to*
die, because they had not kept their Master better
guarded.

§. XXX. SAUL'S Oath to the Witch at *Endor*, to allay her Fears, has been taken notice of already, because of the Credit which was given to it, even by that wicked Sorcerers. And we may further observe here, That, tho' *Saul* had cut off those that had familiar Spirits, and the Wizards, out of the Land, yet, according to his Oath to this Woman, there did no Punishment happen to her for this thing.

--- xxviii. 10.
Chap.i. §. xix.
P. 43.

§. XXXI. IN like manner, when the poor *Egyptian* Servant, whom *David* asked to conduct him (as before is mentioned) in the pursuit of the ravaging *Amalekites*, requested of him to swear unto him by God, that he would neither kill him, nor deliver him into the Hands of his Master, *David* made no scruple to give him that Security, as the Condition of the Service required of him.

Chap.i. §.xx.
P. 43.

§. XXXII. THO' *Abner*, after *Saul's* Death, had set up *Ishboseth*, his Son, and continued to support him, a long time, as King over *Israel*; yet, no sooner did a personal Quarrel happen between them, but private Resentment broke all the Ties of Blood and Alliance; and then (tho' not before) he could recognize *David's* Divine Right, and cry out, with an Oath, So do God to *Abner*, and more also, except, as the Lord hath sworn to *David*, even so do I unto him; to translate the Kingdom from the House of *Saul*, and set up the Throne of *David*, &c. Whence we may observe, 1. How little Dependence there is upon the Attachment and Allegiance of the greatest Statesmen or Politicians, (how gravely soever professed, or how solemnly soever sworn,) when they are Slaves to their own Passions, and

1Sam.xxx. 15.

2Sam.iii.9,10.

not

not governed by Principles of true Religion and Loyalty. 2. That *David*, having an undoubted Right of Succession to the Throne, immediately after the Death of *Saul*, might lawfully serve himself, in order to the Recovery of his Right, by en-

—ver. 12. 13. tering into Treaties, and making a League (as he did) with *Abner*, whatever was the Motive of his Revolt from the Prince in Possession, and his Return to the Obedience and Service of his rightful Sovereign. And

—ver. 29. therefore, 3. As the Curse which *David* denounced against *Joab*, was justly deserved, for his base and treacherous killing a reconciled Subject, whom the King had received

—ver. 35. into Favour: So 4. The Solemn Fast, to which the King obliged himself by an Oath, the Princely Funeral, and the unaffected Mourning observed on that Occasion, were demonstrative Proofs, that the good King was no way guilty of an Action so perfidious and inhospitable, as that of *Joab's* killing *Abner*.

§. XXXIII. AGAIN, when the Assassins brought unto *David* the Head of his Rival *Ishbosheth*, he was so far from giving them the Reward

—iv. 9. &c. they expected, that he solemnly called God to Witness his Abhorrence of

the Fact, and rewarded the bloody Instruments according to their proper Demerits. So averse are all rightful Princes in general, from such Murders in cool Blood, which none but the most execrable Usurpers, and their Butcherly Tools, can perpetrate or patronize!

§. XXXV. Now, after the Death of *Ishbosheth*, all the Tribes of *Israel* came to *David* unto *Hebron*, where he made a League, or Covenant, with them before the Lord; which we may suppose to have

—v. 1, &c.
1 Chron. xi. 1.
&c.

have been such as Kings are now wont to condescend to at their Coronation. But, it is absurd, to call this an *Original Contract*, as if it were the sole Basis upon which the Right of Government is founded: Especially in Hereditary Countries; where the Right descends in the orderly Course of Birth, and the King is not King because he is Crowned, but he is therefore Crowned because he is the King by Right inherent. For, such a King is completely King, without the Ceremonies of either Coronation or Proclamation, or else he can never be made lawful and rightful King, by either or both of these; as *Intrad. p. 29.* hath been noted before, in the Remarks upon Mr. *Whiston's* Proposition.

§. XXXV. No sooner was King *David* settled in the peaceable Possession of his undoubted Divine Right of Sovereignty over all the Tribes of *Israel*, but his first Care and Concern was for the solemn Worship of God; well knowing, that Purity and Sincerity in his Worship was the best, and only sure, Stay of his own Power, and his People's Prosperity. For tho' there was a Royal Palace built for him, he would not yet inhabit it, but *swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; Surely, I will not come into the Tabernacle of my House, nor go up into my Bed, I will not give Sleep to mine Eyes, nor Slumber to mine Eye-lids, until I find out a Place for the Lord, an Habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.* In pursuance of which pious Oath and Vow, he immediately prepared a Place for the Ark of God, and pitched for it a Tent: After which he brought it up, with great Solemnity, and set it in the midst of the Tabernacle that he had pitched for it. And yet, not

2 Sam. v. 11.

1 Chron. xiv. 1.

Psa. cxxxii. 2.

&c.

1 Chron. xv. 1.

2 Sam. vi. 17.

1 Chron. xvi. 1.

con-

content with this, considering, how unfitting it was, that he himself should dwell in an House of Cedar, but the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord remain under Curtains, he had resolved to build a magnificent Temple, for its Residence, and God's Divine Worship, if the Lord had not declared his Will, to defer that great Work till the more peaceful Reign of his Son Solomon; tho' David himself made great Preparations for it, and gave Solomon particular Instructions for the due Performance of it.

§. XXXVI. Now, to proceed to David's lamentable Case, after the unhappy matter of Uriah. When the Prophet *Nathan* had represented his Crime to him in a proper Light, under the Parable of the *Ewe-Lamb*, the King, highly resenting such a flagrant Act of Injustice, swore, *As the Lord liveth, the Man that hath done this thing shall surely die.* And yet, we find, when it was applied home to himself, and proved to be his own Case, he did not die for it. But, we are to consider, 1. That he was a Rightful Sovereign, and an independent Prince, not Subject to any Earthly Tribunal; and consequently, there could not be any competent Authority for the Execution of such a Sentence upon him. 2. That the Words, in the Original, (as is noted on the Margin) do not properly import a peremptory Sentence, that he *shall surely die*; but rather, a Declaration only, that he deserves, or *is worthy to die.* However, 3. When David made a sincere penitential Confession of his *having sinned against the Lord*, the Prophet pronounced his Pardon and Absolution, as well from the Sin, as from the Oath, saying, *The Lord also hath put away thy Sin; Thou shalt not die.* But yet, 4. Neither did he

2 Sam. vii. 2.

&c.

1 Chron. xvii.

1, &c.

--- xxii. 1. &c

--- xxvii. 1. &c.

--- xxix. 1. &c.

2 Sam. xii. 5.

—ver. 13.

he go unpunished. For, Almighty God, who is the *King of Kings, and the only Ruler of Princes*, took him into his own Hands, and permitted the unruly Wills and Affections of sinful Men to break out, (without Restraint) to his condign and exemplary Punishment; as in the Case of his unnatural Son *Absalom*, and others. From all which we may learn, 5. How to understand that Expression of this Royal Penitent, *Against thee, Psa. li. 4.* *THEE ONLY, have I sinned, &c.* Not that he denied, or was insensible of, his heinous *Sin*, with respect to the innocent *Uriah* in particular, and to all Mankind in general, through the Scandal of his Example: But that, being a rightful King, and God's Vice-gerent, he was subordinate to him alone, and accountable to none else, in respect of Punishment.

§. XXXVII. AFTER *Absalom* had lived in a voluntary Exile, *three Years*, for the Murder of his elder Brother *Amnon*, *Joab*, perceiving, that the King began to shew more Concern for the Absence of the one, than the Death of the other, subtilly instructed an artful Woman, to personate a disconsolate *Widow*; pretending to bemoan the Loss of one of her own two Sons, slain by the other, and the Danger of her becoming childless and inconsolable, by the Revengers of Blood bringing the Survivor to Justice. When she had told her feigned Tale, in all her most moving and affecting Terms, to work upon the King's Compassion; he generously promised her, with an Oath, *As the 2 Sam. xiv. 11.* *Lord liveth, there shall not one Hair of thy Son fall to the Earth.* And thereupon the Woman making an Application of the whole to the Case of *Absalom*, the King's Affection prevailed with him to consent that he should be recalled home, tho' not admitted into his Father's Presence within *two full Years* longer.

M

§. XXXVIII,

§. XXXVIII. WHEN *Absalom* had escaped condign Punishment for the unnatural Murder of his Brother, he soon began to project a still more unnatural Rebellion and Usurpation, even against his too-indulgent Father: And, having formed his Scheme, and cajoled the giddy Multitude, with plausible Insinuations, of the Redress of pretended Grievances, (by which he *stole the Hearts of the Men* — xv. 7. 8. *of Israel*,) his next Plot was, to obtain his Father's Leave, to go to *Hebron*, under colour of a *Vow*, which he pretended to have *vowed to serve the Lord* there. The good King, glad to find his Son in so pious a Disposition, and looking upon it as an hopeful Indication of a serious Resolution to repent of his former Wickedness, willingly granted his Request: But, how religiously he was disposed to *serve the Lord*, appeared in the then unparalleled Revolution which was so hypocritically projected! And yet, RELIGION was (as when *Satan transforms himself into* 2 Cor. xi. 14. *an Angel of Light*, he commonly wears it for) a *Masquerade*, to cover and disguise the blackest Crimes, which the Devil can put into the Heads of graceless Children, ungrateful Servants, and infatuated Subjects, to commit against the best of Fathers, Masters, and Sovereigns! . We do not indeed find, that this *Absalom*, and his *Abitbophels*, had yet proceeded so far, as to entangle the Souls of *David's* Subjects with the iniquitous Bonds of *Oaths of Allegiance* (where none could be due,) to the new, self-made Revolution-King: But, they actually formed an *Association* among themselves, by Means of their *Spies sent throughout all the Tribes*: 2 Sam. xv. 10. &c. And they might easily procure Subscriptions and Contributions too, (if they required any) for the carrying on their Good-Old-

Old-Cause, when *the People increased continually*, to associate with the *Conspirators*; tho' many went in their *Simplicity*, and knew not any thing of the real Design, nor suspected the least of what Mischiefs were to be the natural Consequents thereof. This fallacious Pretence of a religious *Vow* will, however, warrant the Truth of this Remark, That "the Devil has, in all Ages, brought about his most pernicious Stratagems under the Shew of Sanctity: He's willing, that Men should profess as much Goodness as they please, if he may but have the Management of it: He very well understands his own Interest; and is too cunning, to forbid his Prose-lytes the Use of all Religion: Upon Condition, that they will be employ'd in the Way of Schism and Sedition, he allows them to dress themselves with all the external Ornaments of Holiness: If he hath secured all within, and be certain, that Hypocrisy lies lurking in the Heart, when a splendid Zeal appears on the Out-side, he is very well satisfy'd; and fears no Evil from the long and tedious Exercises of such religious Mountebanks," &c.

Ahitophel's
Pol. defeated.
A Sermon,
9 Sept. 1783.

§. XXXIX. IN *Hushai's* Address to *Absalom*, we meet with some Passages, which indeed, at first Sight, seem to need an Apology. As his saluting the Usurper, in the Royal Style, *God save the King, God save the King!* —His seeming to acknowledge a providential Right to the Sovereignty in him, as one whom the Lord, and the People, and all the Men of Israel had chosen! —And his Profession of Duty and Service to him, as he had served his Father! But, we must here observe, 1. That all which *Hushai* did in this Case, was by the Authority and special

2 Sam. xvi.
16, &c.

Command of *David*, his rightful Sovereign. 2. That *Absalom* being, at this Time, a bare-fac'd Rebel and Usurper, had thereby forfeited all the Rights of Civil Society; and his royal Father had a Right to treat him as a common Enemy, by employing either open Force, or secret Artifice and Stratagems, to reduce and defeat him. 3. That

--- xv. 31, &c. *David* having pray'd unto the Lord,

to turn the Counsel of *Ahithophel* into Foolishness, Providence immediately sent *Hushai*, his faithful Friend and Counsellor, to meet him, with all Demonstrations of Sympathy in his royal Master's Sufferings, and Resolution to follow his Fortunes. 4. That the King, being thus happily furnished with a proper Instrument (and indeed, the only one who was able to cope with and counter-plot the politic *Ahithophel*) made use of him accordingly, to insinuate himself into the Usurper's Favour, in order to discover the Enemy's Counsels, disconcert their Measures, and to act as he should see most conducive to his Master's true Interest and Service. 5. That, as this Policy in King *David* was no less justifiable, than the common Practice of keeping Agents in foreign Courts, to give Intelligence of their suspected Designs, sending Spies into an Enemy's Camp, to discover his intended Motions, or making use of Stratagems in War (which were never yet accounted unlawful: So, *Hushai* could not have fully acquitted himself of so nice a Trust, if he had not conformed to the Ceremonies and Style of the Time, and Place, and Persons, with whom he was instructed to treat and negotiate. 6. That an over-ruling Providence had ordered, that the Means effectually answered the End: For (as we are expressly assured by the sacred

Text) the Lord had appointed to defeat the good (politic) Counsel of *Ahithophel*.
— xvii. 14.

thophel, to the Intent that the Lord might bring Evil upon Absalom. But, we must observe withal, 7. That amidst all the other Court-Compliments, Hushai "neither prays personally for "Absalom, nor professes Allegiance

Life of David,
vol. ii. p. 181.

"to him:" And much less did he go that unwarrantable Length of Compliance; to profane the holy Name of God, by any Oath, either of Allegiance to the then *de facto* Possessor Absalom, or Abjuration of the then dispossessed (but nevertheless the *de jure* Sovereign) David; as is intimated in the foregoing Section. And, 8. That, so far was David himself from giving the least Countenance to such a gross Profanation of Oaths or Vows, that, in several of his holy Psalms (which are supposed to have been penned on this, or the like, Occasion) he not only complains heavily of their Perfidiousness, who had broken

Psa. lv. 20, &c.

their Covenant, and revolted from their due Allegiance; but foretells their sudden Destruction: Among those who shall abide in God's Tabernacle, and who shall dwell in his holy Hill, he reckons

— xv. 4.
— xxiv. 4.

him that sweareth to his own Hurt, and changeth not; or, (as it is expressed in our Psalter-Version) him that sweareth unto his Neighbour, and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own Hindrance; plainly implying, that all those who act the contrary, and swear deceitfully, shall be utterly excluded thence: And, as to the Vows, which he made unto the Lord, in his Distress, he declares his firm and pious Resolution, to pay them, in the Presence of all his People, — in the Courts of the Lord's House, in the midst of Jerusalem.

— lxvi. 13,
14.
— lxvi. 14,
18.

§. XL. JOAB'S Oath, which he swore, to persuade *David* to cease his Mourning for the Death of his Rebel-Son *Absalom*, was in these
 2 Sam. xix. 7. Terms, *I swear by the Lord, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this Night!* Which, tho' it prevailed with the King to put on a cheerful Air before his People; yet, the arrogant and menacing Manner of it, together with the Insolence of his Behaviour on other Occasions, were so distasteful, that the King resolved to take the first fair Opportunity to dismiss him. And, accordingly,

§. XLI. WHEN *David* sent the Priests, to incite the Elders of *Judah* to return to their due Allegiance, he instructed them withal, to assure *Amasa* (who had been the General under *Absalom*) that he should be preferred to *Joab's* Post; saying, (in the King's Name) *God do so to me,*
 — ver. 13. *and more also, if thou be not Captain of the Host before me continually, in the Room of Joab:* In Pursuance of which solemn Oath, *Amasa* was promoted to the Command, against the Rebel *Sheba*; tho' he was, soon after, basely assassinated (as *Abner* had been before) by the same accursed Hand of *Joab*.
 — xx. 4. &c.
 §. xxxii p. 78.

§. XLII. THE next that we meet with, is the Oath, which the Men of *David* swore unto him, saying, *Thou shalt go no more out with us to the Battle, that thou quench not the Light of Israel!* Which is not to be understood, as if they had presumed to lay any forcible Restraint upon him; (for that is what no Subjects can have any Authority to offer to their own Sovereign:) But only as a more earnest and affectionate Expression of their Loyalty, and pious Zeal for the safety of his royal Person; which they had formerly advised him to take especial
 — xviii. 3. Care

Care of, when they marched out against *Abſalom*, but now repeated with a ſolemn *Oath*, in conſideration of the great Dangers he had newly eſcaped, in a freſh War with the *Philiftines*.

§. XLIII. IN the Decline of *David's* Life, his Son *Adonijah* exalted himſelf to be King. Whereupon, *Nathan* the Prophet (who had formerly foretold him of *Solomon* to be his Succeſſor) now gave Counſel to *Bath-ſheba* (the Mother of *Solomon*) to put the King in mind thereof, and how he had ſworne to her, that *Solomon*, her Son, ſhould aſſuredly reign after him (which *Nathan* himſelf alſo came in to ſecond;) ſo that *David* immediately aſſented, and ſware, As the Lord liveth, — even as I ſware unto thee, — ſo will I certainly do this Day: And forthwith he gave Order, that *Solomon* ſhould be ſet upon his Throne accordingly.

— viii. 12,
1 Chron. xxii. 9.
1 Kings i. 13,
&c.
— 22, &c.

---ver. 29, &c.

§. XLIV. AND now we find *Adonijah* fled to the Horns of the Altar for Sanctuary, and requiring *Solomon's* Oath for the Safety of his Life; which the young King granted, in theſe Terms, If he will ſhew himſelf a worthy Man, there ſhall not an Hair of him fall to the Ground: But, if Wickedneſs be found in him, he ſhall die. This was a promiſory Oath, but only upon an expreſs Condition of future good Behaviour; ſo that its Obligation could not bind the one Party, longer than the Condition was performed by the other. When therefore *Adonijah* had given freſh Cauſe of Jealouſy, by aſpiring to marry one of the late King's Concubines, or Widows, (which, in thoſe Times, was look'd upon as a Deſign to revive his former Pretenſions to the Crown) the Condition being thereby broken, the Obligation of the Oath was void, and

---ver. 51, &c.

—ii. 17, &c.

and the Penalty of his forfeited Life justly exacted. But here a Question may arise, How this was consistent with his solemn Promise, or Oath, made to his Mother, before he heard her Request, *Ask on,*

— ver. 20, *my Mother; for I will not say thee*
Nay? Yet when she had presented

Adonijah's Petition for Abishag, he
swore, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah
have not spoken this Word against his own Life!

The true Solution of which is, "That, in Oaths

" indefinitely made unto the Will of

Sanderfon of " others, the Condition ever to be
Oaths, Lect. iii.

§. xvi. " understood, is, If the Request, by

" the Rule of Good and Honest, be

" modestly asked, it is just and reasonable it should

" be faithfully performed." For otherwise, they

are neither obligatory nor lawful.

§. XLV. THEN follows the Case of *Shimi:*

Who, tho' he had, in the most out-

2 Sam. xvi. 5, ragious Manner, insulted and blas-

phemed King David, in his Flight

from the Usurper *Absalom*; yet, on the joyful Day

of the Restoration, was, on the easy Terms of an

Acknowledgment of his Crime, generously respit-

ed from his due Punishment, and that too confirmed

with this Oath, that *he would not put*

him to Death with the Sword: Never-

theless, that such a Blasphemer of the

Lord, and his Anointed, should not go off with

Impunity, King *David* left it to the Wisdom of his

Son *Solomon*, to *bring down his kcar Head to the*

Grave with Blood. Where " it must be remem-

" bered, that the Obligation of this

Life of David, " Oath was purely personal: — And

vol. p. 332. " therefore, although *David* was

" bound, *Solomon* was at full Liberty, to vindic-

" cate the Majesty of Kings, in chastising this high

" Insult

“ Insult upon his Father, after such a Manner as
 “ he thought fit.” And *Solomon*, accordingly,
 thought fit to confine him to his
 House in *Jerusalem*, on Pain of Death, *1 Kin. ii. 36, &c.*
 and under the Solemnity of his own Oath also :
 Upon the Breach of which Prohibition, and sacred
 Bond, he deservedly suffered the Penalty to which
 he had assented ; and thus Divine Providence justly
 returned upon his own Head the *Curses*, which his
 foul Mouth had so blasphemously uttered against
 his Sovereign ; tho’ not for the same, but for a
 fresh Crime.

§. XLVI. AFTER the solemn Prayers and Sa-
 crifices offered up by *Solomon*, at the Dedication of
 the Temple, it pleased God, not only to give a
 Token of his gracious Acceptance
 thereof, by a *Fire from Heaven con-* *2 Chron. vii. 1,*
suming the Burnt-Offering, and the Sa- *2.*
crifices, and the Glory of the Lord filling the House :
 But the Lord appeared to *Solomon*, the
 second Time, as he had appeared unto
 him (before, in a Dream by Night) *— i. 7, &c.*
 at *Gibeon* ; and made a Covenant with *1 Kings iii. 5,*
 him, to *establiſh his Throne*, on Condition of his
 Obedience, or to *cut off Israel out of the Land*, in
 case of their Revolt. *&c. — ix. 2, &c.*

§. XLVII. BUT afterwards (alas !) this greatest
 of Kings, and wisest of Men, unhappily giving
 himself up to the *Love of many strange* *— xi. 1, &c.*
Women, and marrying a *Multitude of* *Exo. xxxiv. 16.*
Wives, (contrary to the exprefs Law *Deut. vii. 3,*
 of God) was, by their Insinuations, *&c.*
 in his old Age, drawn in and seduced, *— xvii. 17.*
 not only to tolerate and indulge (what they call)
Liberty of Conscience, but, by Degrees, even to
 join with, and authorize, their several Sorts of Ido-
 latry ! And thus, having, on his Part, broken the

Covenant of the Lord, he brought upon his Family that Breach in the Succession, which followed, in the Reign of his Son, by *Jeroboam's* Usurpation.

§. XLVIII. WHEN good King *Asa* succeeded in the Hereditary Throne of *Judah*, he took care to gather his People together at *Jerusalem*: Where

they entered into a Covenant to seek the Lord God of their Fathers, with all their Heart, and with all their Soul;

2 Chron. xv. 9, &c.

That whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death: — And they swore unto the Lord, with a loud Voice, and with Shouting, and with Trumpets, and with Cornets: And all Judah rejoiced at the Oath, &c. And good Reason they had indeed, to rejoice at such an holy Covenant: which was sworn with all their Heart, to the great Advancement of God's holy Religion and Worship, and by the lawful Authority of their undoubted Sovereign: Not hypocritically, upon Principles of Schism and Rebellion, (like some other Oaths and Covenants, to which this Case has been misapplied) with Design to overturn and destroy both the Church and the King!

§. XLIX. WHEN the same King *Asa* was invaded by *Baasha* of *Israel*, he thought it good Policy, to send rich Presents to *Ben-*

1 Kings xv. 18, &c.

2 Chron. xvi. 1, &c.

hadad, King of *Syria*, to engage him to break his League with *Baasha*, and make an Attack upon the Frontiers of *Israel*, by way of Diversion, in his Favour; which had its desired Effect. And, tho' a Prophet of the Lord was thereupon sent to reprove him, it was not for his having, by this Policy, diverted the Enemy's Forces away from him; but because he had relied on the King of *Syria*, and not relied on the Lord, who had not only promised

—ver. 7.

—xv. 1, &c.

—xiv. 9, &c.

—xvi. 8.

promised him his Divine Protection, but had lately given him Victory over the much-more formidable Host of the *Ethiopians* and the *Lubims*; and because he had alienated the sacred *Treasures of the House of the Lord*, to such a profane Use, without Necessity.

§. L. AFTER the Prophet *Elijah* had foretold to *Abab* (with the solemn Assurance of an *Oath*) the long Drought and Famine which was to ensue, the wicked Tyrant, finding the Prediction verified, sought every where 1 Kings xvii. 1. to find him out, with Intention to put him to death. At last, the Prophet met, and shewed himself to *Obadiab*; who (tho' one of *Abab's* Servants) was a good Man, and feared the Lord greatly; bidding him, Go tell his — ver. 3. &c. Lord, where he was. But *Obadiab*, fearing, left the Prophet might, in the mean time, be gone, and leave him (as a Deceiver) exposed to his Master's furious Resentment, would have avoided that Danger, saying, *As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no Nation, or Kingdom, whither my Lord hath not sent to seek thee; and,* — ver. 10. *when they said, He is not there, he took an Oath of the Kingdom or Nation, that they found thee not:* To which the Prophet replied, *As the Lord of Hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him To-day.* In — ver. 15. which Passage, we may observe four several Oaths; 1. That of the Prophet to *Abab*; which was prophetic, or declaratory of the Judgment impending. 2. That of *Obadiab*; which was Assertory, serious, and necessary, to assure the Prophet of the Truth of what he apprehended. 3. That which *Abab* insisted on; which seems to have been, by way of Adjuration, for Discovery of the Truth, and was, formally, valid and obligatory, so far (at least)

least) as his Jurisdiction and Authority extended; tho' it was, intentionally, wicked and unlawful, being imposed with a Design to murder the Innocent. And, 4. That of the Prophet to *Obadiab*; which was promisory, reasonable, and necessary also, in a Case of that Importance, to dissipate the good Man's just Fears, and give him Assurance, that he should not incur any Danger by delivering his Message.

§. LI. THE blasphemous Imprecations which *Benbadad*, King of Syria, vented against *Israel*, with the Effects thereof, have been already taken notice of: But here we must further observe, That the Covenant with which *Abab* had dismissed him, was so offensive to God, that he sent a Prophet to the latter, with this Message, *Because thou hast let go out of thy Hand a Man whom I appointed to utter Destruction, therefore thy Life shall go for his Life, and thy People for his People!*

§. LII. THE like Notice has also been taken, of the Imprecations of *Jezebel* against *Elijah*: But the Case of *Naboth* (wherein her Husband, *Abab*, himself was so deeply concern'd) is proper to be stated here. When honest *Naboth* could not be persuaded to alienate his *Vineyard*, to gratify *Abab*, at the Expence of his own Conscience, *Jezebel* (a fit Wife for so wicked a Man) undertook, by an hellish Plot, to put him into Possession of what he could not obtain by lawful Purchase. To this End a Mock-Fast was solemnly proclaimed, and false Witnesses suborn'd, to prove the Proprietor guilty of blaspheming God and the King! In consequence of which, *Naboth* was, under the Colour of Law, formally adjudged

to Death for the pretended *Blasphemy*, and his Estate forfeited to the Crown for pretended Treason! Where we meet with a Complication of horrid Crimes, naturally consequent upon each other. *Abab*, by *coveting his Neighbour's Vineyard*, was not only himself guilty of violating the Tenth Commandment; but gave his *Jezebel* Occasion also to violate the Third and Ninth, to gratify him, by procuring others to *take the Name of God in vain*, and to *bear false Witness*: And the End of these was *murdering* the innocent Person, and *stealing* his Inheritance, in like open Violation of the Sixth and Eighth. Of all which crying Sins, every one was equally guilty: *Abab* himself, who gave the first Rise to it; *Jezebel*, his Wife, who form'd the whole Scheme, and set it first in Motion; *the Elders and Nobles of Israel*, to whom she communicated her Plot, with Orders how to proceed (and who were too much Courtiers, to question the Justice of it;) and all the rest, who were any way aiding or assisting, consenting, or privy to, and concealing this damnable Conspiracy, as much as the several Instruments and Agents, who acted their respective Parts in this bloody Tragedy. Yea, supposing *Abab* himself had not, at that Time, been so much as privy to the Plot, or to the Means by which it was carried on; yet his *taking Possession* of another Man's Inheritance, and keeping it, after he knew it was unjustly obtain'd, rendered him, nevertheless, obnoxious to the Divine Vengeance, as a Thief and a Robber: So that, how artfully soever the Plot was laid, and the Scenes managed, the *Catastrophe* was dismal, when the just Judgments of God were signally executed, not only upon *Abab* himself, and his *Jezebel*, but upon all his Fa-

—ver. 16, &c.

—xxii. 38.

2 Kings ix. 21, &c.

—36, 37.

—x. 1, &c.

mily

mily and Posterity, according to the Sentence of the Lord denounced by his Prophets!

§. LIII. IN the mean time, we meet with the Case of *Micaiah* the Prophet. When *Abab* had resolved to renew the War against *Ben-badad*, he prevailed with *Jehosaphat*, King of *Judab*, to accompany him: At whose Request, to *inquire at the Word of the Lord*, he consulted his Prophets; and they all, with one Voice, encouraged him to the Expedition, with flattering Promises of Success. But, *Jehosaphat* inquiring, if there was no other Prophet of the Lord, whom they might consult, *Micaiah* was sent for; tho' *Abab* confessed his Hatred of him, because he prophesied not in the plausible Court-Dialect, but strictly according to the Word of the Lord. When he came, he, at first, gave *Abab* the same Answer, as the others had done; tho' in such an ironical Manner, as plainly shewed his Contempt of their fallacious Predictions.

1 Kings xxii.
16. &c.

2 Chron. xviii.
15, &c.

However, being solemnly *adjured*, to tell him nothing but that which was true, in the Name of the Lord, the Prophet, thus put to his Oath, seriously represented to him the *Lying Spirit* of his false Prophets, and plainly foretold the Ruin and Destruction which afterwards befell him; tho' he foresaw, it would cost himself a severe Imprisonment in the mean time. So sacred is the Name of God; that whosoever takes it in his Mouth, or speaks his Word, must always do it, seriously and solemnly, fairly and frankly, as well as truly and reverently, whatever may be the Dread of the Consequences.

§. LIV. THE next we come to, is the Oath which *Elisba* the Prophet sware, when his Master, *Elijah*, persuaded him to tarry behind, at the time of his Departure: As the Lord liveth, (said he) and as thy Soul liveth,

2 Kings ii. 2.
&c.

liveth, I will not leave thee. Which was not a rash and unadvised Oath, and, much less, an Act of Disobedience to his Authority, but deliberately and maturely considered, as well as three times repeated; to testify his Foreknowledge and Belief, that *Elijah* was suddenly to be translated, and his faithful Affection, and stedfast Adherence to him, to the last Moment.

§. LV. THEN follows the Execration or *Curse*, in the Name of the Lord, denounced by the same Prophet *Elisba*, upon those profligate Wretches, *who mocked him*, as he — ver. 23, &c. went into *Beth-el*; which was immediately executed, by two *She-Bears*, in the Death of *Forty and two* of them. Where we may note, 1. That, tho' our Translation calls them *little Children*, the Original Word, in the *Hebrew*, may, as properly, mean well grown young People. 2. That it was not a personal Affront only which they offered unto the Prophet himself, but even a Contempt of God, whose Minister he was, and an audacious Derision of that miraculous Translation of *Elijah*; as if these *Mockers* had said, *Go up, thou Bald-Head! Go up, thou Bald-Head*, to Heaven, whither thy Master (as thou pretendest) is gone before! And, 3. That it was God's Will, by such an exemplary Judgment, to guard his own Honour, and that of his Prophets, from Contempt and Insult, (and particularly, in a Place ^{1 King. xii. 28, 29.} which was so vilely desecrated by *Je-roboam's* schismatical and idolatrous Calf-Worship!) as well as to demonstrate, that the Spirit and Power of God was now descended upon *Elisba*, as it had before upon *Elijah*.

§. LVI. WHEN the faithful *Shunamite's* Child was suddenly taken sick and died, she went, in all haste, to *Elisba*; hoping, that God, by his means, would

would restore the Child to Life. The Prophet immediately dispatched his Servant to her House, with instructions what to do; not thinking then (it seems) to go himself. But, when
 2 Kings iv. 30. *the Mother of the Child said* (with an Oath) *As the Lord liveth, and as thy Soul liveth, I will not leave thee,* he presently arose and followed her. Which may teach us, That, when our Neighbour has made a promisory Oath, or Vow, of a Thing which in itself is lawful, we ought to grant him any reasonable Request, rather than, through our Refusal or Neglect, suffer him to violate the same, and *take the Name of God in vain.*

§. LVII. WHEN Naaman, the Syrian, was recovered of his Leprosy, the same good Prophet, by whose Instruction he became clean, absolutely refused to take any Reward, or Present, declaring
 — v. 16. *solemnly, As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none.* But, his covetous Servant, nevertheless, made bold to swear, in the same solemn Terms, *As the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him!* Where we may observe, That their Oaths, tho' formally the same in Words, were contrary in Nature and Obligation. For,
 1. That of *Elisha* was for the Honour of God, whose Minister he was, and to teach the grateful Patient, that his Acknowledgment must be made to God, the Author, rather than to him, who was but the humble Instrument, of the Cure: His Oath was therefore not only lawful, but religious; and, as such, it was inviolably observed on his Part. But, 2. As to *Gebazi's*, it proceeded from a base Principle of sordid Avarice and *silly Lucre*: And, as the End and Intention of it was therefore utterly unlawful, so were the Means which he used in pursuance of it; forging an impudent Lie, to
 cover

cover his own Craft, and impose upon the generous *Naaman*; exposing his Master's Name and Character to Reproach, as if he had not duly regarded his Oath; and, in a Word, endeavouring to conceal all this from the All-seeing God, whose just Judgment he thereby brought down upon his own Head.

§. LVIII. WHEN *Ben-badad* II. so closely besieged *Samaria*, that it was, by *Famine*, reduced to the utmost Distress, *Jehoram* (the Son of *Abah*) rashly imputing the Cause of it to the Prophet *Elisha*, sware (as his Mother *Jezebel* had done before, in her mad Rage against *Elijah*, (and in much the same Terms) *God do so, and more also, to me, if the Head of Elisha—shall stand*

Ch. i. §. xxiii.
P. 44.

on him this Day! Now, this Oath was undoubtedly sinful; and therefore not to be kept. But, whether *Jehoram* repented of it, as such, after his first Sally of Passion and Fury was over, we are not informed. However, as the Prophet was under God's more immediate Protection, it was certainly thro' his over-ruling Providence, that *Jehoram* never made any further Attempt, after this, upon *Elisha's* Life, in pursuance of that Oath, when they were together; as, we find, they were in Conversation, afterwards, both in this and the following Chapter.

§. LIX. AND now we come to the Case of *Atthaliah*; who (being the Daughter of the wicked *Abah* and *Jezebel*) was Sister to the before-named *Jehoram* of *Israel*, and Wife to *Jehoram* (the Son of *Jehosaphat*) King of *Judah*. No sooner was her Son *Abaziab* (who succeeded his Father) slain, by the Order of *Jebu*, in the Company of his Uncle *Jehoram*, but she imme-

—viii. 28, &c.
—ix. 27, &c.
—xi. 1, &c.
2 Chron. xxii.
7, &c.

O

diately

diately usurped the hereditary Throne of *Judab*. And, hoping thereby to secure herself, in her so ill-gotten Power, against all rightful Pretenders, she *destroyed all the Seed-Royal* of that House, so far as she could find them within the Reach of her bloody Arm! But, Divine Providence having miraculously preserved *Joash*, the Son and Heir of *Abaziah*, (then but a Year old) he was happily secreted, *in the House of the Lord*, by the dutiful and affectionate Care of *Jeboiada*, the High-Priest, and his Wife, *Jeboseba*, (the Sister of *Abaziah*) till a fair Opportunity offered, to do Justice to the right Heir, against the injurious Possessor and unnatural Butcher! Then, *Jeboiada*, having taken

2 Kings xi. 4,

Ec.

2 Chron. xxiii.

1, Ec.

proper Measures, to *strengthen himself*, with the Priests, and the Levites, the Captains of Hundreds, and the Chiefs of the Fathers of Israel, brought them into the House of the Lord, and made a Covenant with them, and took an Oath of them, in the House of the Lord, and shewed them the King's Son: In Consequence of which loyal Concert, or Association, the rightful Heir was happily restored, and the Usurper justly deposed and slain; after which, *all the People of the Land rejoiced, and the City was quiet*. Where we must understand, 1. That the Oath here taken was a previous Oath of Secrecy, as well as of Allegiance, and an Association for their mutual Fidelity, and firm Adherence

2 Kings xi. 17,

Ec.

2 Chron. xxiii.

16.

to it: And the Covenant which was made, between the Lord, and the King, and the People, that they should be the Lord's People, was, after the Usurper was slain, when the King was set on the Throne of his Ancestors, and the Crown placed upon the proper Head. 2. That such Oaths and Associations, in such a righteous Cause, are undoubtedly

doubtedly necessary, as well as lawful; and consequently (then, and then only) obligatory, in Honour, Law and Conscience. And, 3. That the Restoration of his rightful Sovereign was an Action well-becoming the Character and Station of God's High-Priest; true Religion and true Loyalty being inseparable Companions; always ready, as in Duty bound, to support each other, to the utmost of their respective Powers.

§. LX. HERE (as Chronologers generally place it) we find the Case of *Jonah*. The Effect it had upon the heathen Mariners, has been noted, in its proper

Ch. i. §. xxv.
p. 46

Place: But, as to himself, we must further observe, That as he *prayed unto the Lord*, in his *Affliction*, and made Vows for Deliverance; so he resolved (as he was in Duty bound) religiously to perform them: *I will sacrifice unto thee with the Voice of Thanksgiving*, (said he;) *I will pay That that I have vowed*.

Jon. ii. 9.

§. LXI. AFTER this, we meet with the Case of *Hoshea*, of *Israel*; whose Submission to, and his subsequent Revolt from, *Shalmaneser*, has been already taken Notice of, among the other Instances cited by Mr. *Whiston*.

2 Kings xvii.
3, &c.
Introd. §. iii.
p. 17.

§. LXII. The next we meet with, is good *Hezekiah* King of *Judah*, famous for his Reformation of his People, and for the Covenant which he made with the Lord God of *Israel*, that his fierce Wrath might turn away from them. And how remarkably he was protected, by Divine Providence, against the blasphemous Insults of *Sennacherib*, has been set forth already.

2 Kings xviii.
4, &c.
2 Chron. xxix.
10, &c.

Ch. i. §. xxvi.
p. 46.

§. LXIII. AFTER that again, we find a like *Covenant* solemnly renewed, by good King *Josiah*, and all his People, *before the Lord*, to walk after the Lord, and to keep all his Commandments, &c. Wherein 'tis to be observed, 1. To what a monstrous Degree of Impiety he found the Nation degenerated, at the Time of his Succession to the Throne; so that, among the many other crying Sins, charged even upon the Princes, the Judges, the Prophets and the Priests of Jerusalem, we find (what most immediately relates to our present Purpose) that it was grown common, to worship, and swear by the Lord, and by the Idol *Malcham* both! And, 2. That he who performed this great and necessary Work, to reform a wicked Nation, was an undoubted Rightful Sovereign, (as were *Asha* also, and *Hezekiah*, before mentioned) in a due hereditary Course of Descent from *David* and *Solomon*; whereas it is not to be expected of *Usurpers*, to undertake in Earnest what is so essentially inconsistent with the false Maxims and Principles to which alone they owe their personal Interest and Support.

§. LXIV. THE Case of *Jehoiakim* has been mentioned before, as being similar to that of *Hoshea*; which is one of the Instances produced by Mr. *Whiston*.

§. LXV. HERE, in the proper Order of Time, we meet with the Case of the *Rechabites*, mentioned, by way of Reproach to the Jews, by the Prophet *Jeremiah*. These People had been (as it seems, under the Obligation of a solemn Oath or Vow) enjoined, by *Jonadab*, the Son of *Rechab*, (the Founder of their Order or Institution) to drink no Wine, nor build

2 Kings xxiii.
1, &c.
2 Chron. xxxiv.
29, &c.

Zeph. iii. 1,
&c.

— i. 5.

Introd. §. iii.
P. 18.

Jer. xxxv. 6,
&c.

build House, nor sow Seed, nor plant Vineyard, nor have any, but to dwell in Tents all their Days : All which they had punctually observed, till *Nebuchadnezzar* invading the Country, drave them to the Necessity of retiring into *Jerusalem* for Safety. And now the Prophet, by God's express Command, brought them all —ver. 1, &c. into one of the Chambers of the House of the Lord, and set *Wine* before them, inviting them to drink it ; which they refused. Whereupon, a Blessing was promised to them and theirs, for their Obedience to their earthly Father, while heavy Judgments were denounced against the disobedient *Jews*, who kept not the Covenant of the Lord their God.

§. LXVI. NEXT to this follows the Case of *Zedekiah* ; which (being one of the Instances of the sacred Obligation of Oaths of Fealty or Allegiance, selected by Mr. *Whiston*) *Introd. §. iv. p. 18.* has been considered, as such, already.

But here we may further observe, That *Zedekiah* did at first consider his Oath, through the Admonition of *Jeremiah* the Prophet, when the other neighbouring Princes would have engaged him in a League with them against *Nebuchadnezzar* ; tho' afterwards, through the Persuasion of his false Prophets, and a judicial Infatuation, he forgot his Oath, and the proper Import of his Name, (signifying *the Justice of God*) as well as the repeated Warnings from God by his Prophets ; and thereby brought upon himself and his People, that very Destruction, which, by his false Politics and unwarrantable Means, he vainly thought to have avoided. For (as it is well observed)

“ this Sin brings down the Divine
“ Vengeance, not only upon private
“ Persons, but upon whole Nations

*Humphreys on
Ezek. xvii. 19.*

too,

“ too, when it is committed by Great Ones. —
 “ That God does not bless those Means to which
 “ perjured and unrighteous Men have Recourse :
 “ And that it is in vain to trust in Men, when we
 “ have sinned against God ; as it appears (*here*)
 “ by the Example of *Zedekiah*, who, thinking to
 “ meet with Help, from the *Egyptians*, against
 “ the King of *Babylon*, was nevertheless taken,
 “ and carried into Captivity, with all his People.”

§. LXVII. IN the mean time, we find another Breach of *Covenant* by the same *Zedekiah*, and his

Ecc. xxi. 2,

&c.

Lev. xxv. 39,

&c.

Deut. xv. 12,

&c.

Jer. xxxiv. 8,

&c.

great Men, That whereas, in their Distress, they had *proclaimed Liberty* to the *Hebrew Slaves*, according to the *Levitical Law*, yet they afterwards caused those whom they had let go free, to return again to their former Slavery and Subjection : there-
 by transgressing God's *Covenant* and

polluting his holy Name. And, how heinously their Prevarication and Perfidiousness was resented by the Almighty, appears by these Words, in the Mouth of his Prophet *Jeremiah*, *Behold, I proclaim a Liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the Sword, to the Pestilence, and to the Famine : —*

—ver. 17, *&c.* *And I will give the Men that have transgressed my Covenant, which have not performed the Words of the Covenant which they made before me, when they cut the Calf in twain, and passed between the Parts thereof : — I will even give them into the Hands of their Enemies, &c.* Where we may

Chap. i. §. iv.

P. 33.

the Law.

note also, by the way, the same Form of *covenanting*, here described, as we have already observed in Use before

§. LXVIII. WHILE *Jeremiah* was thus honestly and frankly declaring the Words of the Lord against

Jeru-

Jerusalem, the unbelieving Courtiers, under a pretended Charge of *Disaffection to the Government*, procured him to be closely imprisoned. Yet *Zedekiah* himself was pleased to send for him in Secret, and give him a private Audience. And, after the King had given him the Assurance of a solemn *Oath*, in the Name of the Lord, for the Safety of his Life, he plainly foretold him the impending Judgments; and gave him sound Advice for his Conduct, tho' *Zedekiah* had not the Courage or Wisdom to follow it.

Jer. xxxviii.
14, &c.

§. LXXIX. AFTER *Jerusalem* was taken, the King of *Babylon* made *Gedaliah* Governor over the Remnant of the *Jews* who were left in the Land: Who persuaded them to a contented Subjection, and *swore unto them*, that in so doing, it should be well with them.

2 Kings xxv.
24.
Jer. xl. 9.

§. LXX. NEXT follows that Oath, by which *Johanan*, and his Followers, invoked the Lord to be a true and faithful Witness of their Promise, to do and obey whatsoever he should be pleased to command them by his Prophet *Jeremiah*. Yet, when he dissuaded them from their Purpose to go into *Egypt*, assuring them that Destruction would certainly befall them there, so resolute were they to pursue their headstrong Will, that, notwithstanding their solemn Oath of Obedience, into *Egypt* they went; where the Prophecies were verified in their Destruction.

—xlii. 5, &c.

—xliii. 1, &c.

§. LXXI. AFTER the Return of the *Jews* from the Captivity in *Babylon*, we find *Ezra* imploy'd, in reforming, according to the Law, whatsoever was amiss. And many of them having trespassed, by taking strange Wives, of the People of the Land, he made the Chief-Priests,

Ezra x. 1, &c.

the

the Levites, and all Israel, to swear, that they would put away all the strange Wives, and such as were born of them : And they swore accordingly.

§. LXXII. IN like manner did *Nehemiah* bind
Neb. v. 1, &c. *the Nobles and Rulers* in a Covenant,
 to make *Restitution* of all that they
 had exacted of the Poor by Usury and Oppression.
 Where, we may observe, the Form of the *Oath*,
 which they then took, is very singular : For, he
 — ver. 13. *shook his Lap, and said, So God shake*
out every Man from his House, and
from his Labour, that performeth not this Promise;
even thus be he shaken out, and emptied : And all the
Congregation said, Amen ! He also took Care, to
 — ix. 1, &c. appoint a holy religious *Fast*, for all
 — ver. 38. the national Sins : And, as far as in
 — x. 1. him lay, *made a sure Covenant* of Re-
 — ver. 29. formation, under their Hands and
 — xiii. 23, &c. *Seals*, and confirmed with a *Curse* and
an Oath, to walk in God's Law, &c. And, more-
 over, he reformed their strange *Marriages* ; *cur-*
sing, and banishing those who persisted in them,
 and made the rest *swear by God*, not to do the like.
 But, amongst all his pious Acts of Reformation,
 — vii. 63, &c. we ought not to forget his Zeal, to
 restore the regular Priesthood to its
 proper Rights ; and the Service of God in the
 Temple to its Purity. And particularly, that when,
 through the Corruption, or comprehensive Mode-
 — xiii. 4, &c. ration, of *Eliafib* the High-Priest,
 the holy Place had been scandalously
 profaned, for the Accommodation of his Associates,
Nehemiah took good Care to cast them all forth,
 — vi. 18. notwithstanding they had many of the
Jews united to them by *Oaths* and
 Alliances.

AND now, I should have proceeded to the New Testament : But, by the way, let us take a View of the State of the Case, as we find it recorded in the Books commonly called *Apocrypha*. For, tho' we do not hold these of Canonical Authority to establish any Doctrine, Artic. vi. yet we read them for *Example of Life, and Instruction of Manners*: And, as Mr. *Whiston* has produced the Case of *Jaddus* out of *Josephus*, I shall not need any Apology for laying These before my Reader, in a distinct Chapter, as followeth.



P

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

*The History of OATHS and VOWS, LEAGUES
and COVENANTS, in the Books of APOCRY-
PHA.*

§. I. **T**HE first Case we meet with here, is that of Zedekiah, already stated: Agreeable to all which, it is said, that *after that*
Introd. §. IV. King Nabuchodonosor had made him to
p. 18. swear by the Name of the Lord, he fore-
Ch. iii. §. lxvi. swore himself, and rebelled; and hard-
p. 101. ening his Neck, and his Heart, he
1 Esdr. i. 48. transgressed the Laws of the Lord God
of Israel.

§. II. WHEN one of the three young Men, who contended in wise Speeches before King Darius, was declared to have the Preference, and promised whatever he would ask, he petitioned the King, saying, *Remember thy Vow which thou hast vowed, to build Jerusalem in the Day when thou --- iv. 43. &c. camest to thy Kingdom, and to send away all the Vessels, &c.—I desire therefore, that thou make good the Vow, the Performance whereof, with thine own Mouth, thou hast vowed to the King of Heaven; which the King forthwith performed accordingly.*

§. III. AMONG the other Regulations made, in order to the Rebuilding the Temple, we find, that *all they that had made any Vow to God, --- v. 53. began to offer Sacrifices, &c.*

§. IV. IN the Commission from Artaxerxes to Esdras for the Building, this was one Part of his Instruction, *Carry the Gifts unto the --- viii. 13. Lord of Israel to Jerusalem, which I and my Friends have vowed, &c.*

§. V.

§. V. THEN *Esdra*s proceeds to declare, how he vowed a Fast unto the young Men before our Lord, to desire of him a prosperous Journey, both for himself and them that were with him. — ver. 50.

§. VI. ON the Motion of *Jechonias*, *Esdra*s arose, and took an Oath of the Chief of the Priests and Levites of all Israel, to put away all their strange Wives: And so they swore. — ver. 92, &c.

§. VII. WHEN *Tobias* was arrived at *Ecbatane*, to seek a Wife, he refused any Refreshment till he had dispatched his Business, saying, I will eat nothing here, till we agree, and swear one to another; — according to the Custom in making Contracts or Covenants. *Tob. vii. 11.*

§. VIII. WHEN the Marriage was consummated, *Tobias* was prevailed with to tarry with his Father-in-Law, out of Regard to his Oath; *Raguel* having solemnly sworn, that he should not depart, till the fourteen Days of the Marriage were expired. — viii. 20. — ix. 3. — x. 7.

§. IX. WHEN *Nabuchodonosor* made War against *Arphaxad*, he swore by his Throne and Kingdom, that he would surely be avenged upon those who refused him their Aid: — As I live, (saith he) and by the Power of my Kingdom, whatsoever I have spoken, that will I do by mine Hand. And when he sent his General *Holofernes* against the Jews, tho' that Blasphemer could say, Who is God but *Nabuchodonosor*? — Their God shall not deliver them, &c. Yet it soon appeared, to his Confusion, that the Lord God of *Israel* could both deliver them, and punish him, even by the weak Hand of a Woman! — vi. 2, 3. — xiii. 15.

§. X. WHEN *Bethuliab* was closely besieged by *Holofernes*, the Inhabitants murmured against their — vii. 24, 28. Governors, saying, *God be Judge between us and you : For you have done us great Injury, in that you have not required Peace of the Children of Assur : — We take to Witness against you, the Heaven and the Earth, and our God, and the Lord of our Fathers, which punisheth us according to our Sins, &c.*

§. XI. WHEN *Judith* blamed the Governors, for their having sworn to deliver the --- viii. 9, &c. City unto the Assyrians after five Days; — ver. 30. this was their Plea, *The People were very thirsty, and compelled us to do unto them as we have spoken, and to bring an Oath upon ourselves, which we will not break.*

§. XII. THE Words, which *Judith* made use of, in her Address to *Holofernes*, in order to insinuate herself into Credit with him, (*As Nabuchodonosor, King of all the Earth, liveth, and as his Power liveth, who hath sent thee, &c.*) tho' not formally an Oath, are at least a solemn Affirmation, or Obedience, in like Manner, as we have interpreted the Words of *Joseph* to his Brethren.

§. XIII. IN the Case of *Susannah*, the two lustful Elders, who had conspired her Dishonour, made use of a Threatning to win her into a Compliance; declaring, *If thou wilt not, we will* Sus. 21, &c. *bear Witness against thee, that a young Man was with thee, &c.* But, the injured Innocent, making her Appeal to God, who *knew that they had borne false Witness against her, the Lord heard her Voice*, and inspired *Daniel* with Wisdom and Judgment, to discover their Perjury, and to *convict*

convict them of false Witness by their own Mouth. So that, according to the Law of Moses, they did unto them, in such Sort as they maliciously intended to do to their Neighbour : And they put them to Death.

Chap. ii. §. 15.
P. 59.

§. XIV. WHEN Antiochus Epiphanes established Idolatry, and put to Death those who religiously observed the Law of God, yet nevertheless, many in Israel were fully resolved and confirmed in themselves, not to eat any unclean Thing : Wherefore they chose rather to die, that they might not — profane the holy Covenant. Thus,

1 Macc. i. 63.

§. XV. WHEN Mattathias was artfully solicited to a Compliance, by the King's Officers, with large Promises of Friendship, Honours and Rewards, the good Man resolutely answered, *Though all the Nations that are under the King's Dominions obey him, and fall away every one from the Religion of their Fathers, and give Consent to his Commandments ; yet will I, and my Sons, and my Brethren, walk in the Covenant of our Fathers, &c.*

—ii 19, &c.

§. XVI. IN these degenerate and corrupt Times, when the highest Preferments were bought and sold, the basest and most wicked Means were not stuck at, for obtaining even the High-priesthood itself ! Thus was Onias supplanted by his Brother Jason ; and Jason, in like Manner, by Menelaus : But, with this Aggravation, that the latter having corrupted Andronicus, prevailed with him, to impose upon Onias, with false Oaths and Promises, to come forth of the Sanctuary, (to which he had withdrawn himself for Safety) and then to murder him ! But, the Lord was pleased to reward the perjured Instrument according

2 Macc. iv. 34.

— ver. 38. cording to his Demerits, by bringing him to condign Punishment, in *that very Place where he had committed that Impiety!*

§. XVII. NEITHER did the many other Butcheries, committed by that persecuting Tyrant (*Antiochus Epiphanes*) himself escape Divine Vengeance. For, that *Murderer and Blasphemer, having suffered most grievously, as he entreated other Men, so died he a miserable Death, in a strange Country, in the Mountains!*

§. XVIII. AFTER *Antiochus Eupater* had long besieged the Fort of *Zion*, he made a Covenant of Peace with the *Jews*, that *they should live after their Laws, as they did before;* which he and his Princes confirmed to them by a solemn Oath: But, when he entered, and saw the Strength of the Place, *he brake his Oath that he had made, and gave Commandment to pull down the Wall round about.* However, his Perfidy went not unpunished; for he was, soon after, slain by Order of *Demetrius Soter*, upon whose better Title the two last (tho' his own Uncle and Cousin) had been unnatural Usurpers!

§. XIX. AND now, to him came *Alcimus* (an Apostate, who had been, by the late Usurper, intruded into the High-priesthood) with his Train of *all the wicked and ungodly Men of Israel*; filling the King's Ears with false Accusations, and his Mind with strong Prejudices, against *Judas* and his Brethren (the *Maccabees*;) Which had such Effect, that the Apostate was not only continued High-Priest, but joined in Commission with *Bacchides*, to take Vengeance of the Children of Israel. When they came, with their Forces, into *Judea* they

they acted deceitfully, speaking peaceably, and swore unto them, saying, *We will procure the Harm neither of you nor your Friends: But there was neither Truth, nor Righteousness in them; for they broke the Covenant and Oath that they made; and did much Hurt in Israel, even above the Heathen! Yet nevertheless, the wretched Alcimus was overtaken by Divine Justice. For, when he had given Orders for Reforming the Temple (in his own way) by pulling down the Wall of the inner Court of the Sanctuary; as he began to pull down, even at that Time,* —ver. 10, &c. —ix. 54, &c. *was Alcimus plagued, and his Enterprises hindered: For, his Mouth was stopped, and he was taken with a Palsy, so that he could no more speak any thing, nor give Orders concerning his House: So Alcimus died at that Time, with great Torment!*

§. XX. AFTER these, came Nicanor, who bare deadly Hate unto Israel, first deceitfully, with friendly Words, but mischievous Intention: Then, failing of his treacherous Design, he brake out into open Violence, and swore in his Wrath, saying, *Unless Judas and his Host, be now delivered into my Hands, if ever I come again in Safety, I will burn up this House* (meaning the Temple!) But, God's over-ruling Providence so ordered, that he did never come again, to execute his threat'ned Vengeance. For, upon the devout Prayers of the Maccabees and their faithful Adherents, he was himself slain in Battle, and his whole Army discomfited, so that not one of them was left! A Deliverance as signal, as that from the blasphemous Assyrians, in the Days of the good King Hezekiah!

—vii. 35, &c.
2 Macc. xiv. 33.

1 Macc. vii. 43,
&c.
2 Macc. xv. 3,
Ch. i. §. xxvi.
P. 46.

§. XXI.

1 Macc. viii.

17, &c.

—xii. 1, &c.

—xiv. 18.

---xv. 16, &c.

§. XXI. THE League which Judas Maccabeus made with the Senate of Rome, and was afterwards renewed several times by his Brethren, must doubtless have been solemnly ratified by mutual Oaths, according to the constant Practice of both Nations.

§. XXII. AFTER various Conflicts between Bacchides and the Maccabees, they came at length to an Accommodation: And Bacchides *swore unto Jonathan, that he would never do him Harm all the Days of his Life*; which Oath he honourably performed, returning into his own Land; neither came he any more into their Borders.

THIS may suffice from the *Apocrypha*. And now let us proceed to the *New Testament*.



CHAP. V.

*The Scripture-History of OATHS and VOWS,
LEAGUES and COVENANTS, recorded in
the NEW-TESTAMENT.*

§. I. **T**HE first Case which occurs, relating to this Subject, is that of the *Demoniac*, in the Country of the *Gadarenes*:

Who, when our Lord *had commanded the unclean Spirit to come out of the Man*, cried with a loud Voice, *I*

St. Luke viii.
26, &c.
St. Mark v. 7,
&c.

ADJURE thee by God, that thou torment me not. Where we may observe, 1. That

the *Torment*, of which the Devil here was in Dread, was the Prison and *Chains* reserved for his everlasting Punishment *at the Judgment of the great Day*; and which he apprehend-

2 Pet. ii. 4.
Jude 6.
St. Matth. viii.
29.

ed was then to be inflicted upon him *before the Time*. And, 2. That, tho' our Lord had no Regard for the evil Spirit which possessed the Speaker; yet he paid such a Reverence to the holy Name of *God*, by which he was *adjured*, as to permit the *Legion* of Devils, which he cast *out of the Man*, to *enter into*, and destroy, a *whole Herd of Swine*: Whereby he, at once, gave a Proof of his Divine Power, to set Bounds to the Devil's Malice, and, at the same time, inflicted a signal Punishment upon a most covetous and unbelieving People, whose Hearts were set upon the Safety of their *Swine*, more than the Salvation of their own *Souls*.

§. II. THE next is the Account we have of *Herod's* Oath, in relation to *John the Baptist*. The Case was briefly this: The Baptist had fairly represented to *Herod Antipas* the *Unlawfulness* of his

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having married his Brother's Wife: For which honest Freedom Herodias was exasperated to that Degree, that notwithstanding Herod, for some Time, had an Esteem and Reverence for him, she prevailed to have him cast into Prison, with Intent to destroy him at the first Opportunity. Nor was it long, e'er an Occasion offered, to effect her Revenge. For, at a grand Entertainment

St. Matth. xiv.

3, &c.

St. Mark vi.

17, &c.

ment on his Birth-day, her Daughter's Dancing pleased him so that he promised with an OATH, and swore unto the Damsel, saying, *Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the Half of my Kingdom!* Whereupon, she, being before instructed of her Mother, demanded the Head of John the Baptist! And Herod was exceeding sorry: Nevertheless, for his Oath's sake, and them which sat with him at Meat, he commanded it to be given her. In

Ch. iii. §. xlv.

p. 87.

Ch. i. §. xxvii.

p. 47.

which Case we are to consider, 1. That the Matter of the Oath, being expressed in general Words, and Terms indefinite (like those of Solomon and Ahasuerus, herein before set forth) could not be of any Obligation, farther than the Request should be just and honest, possible and reasonable. For otherwise, "this kind

Sanderfon of Oaths, Lect.

iii. §. 16.

1 Cor. vii. 23.

"of Oath, if it be simply understood, according to the Tenor of the Words, is unlawful: He injureth God, (whose Servant every Man is) who maketh himself a Servant to Man, and Slave to another's Rashness." And therefore Herod's Oath, being never capable of Performance, with Justice, Honesty, or Reason, the Tendernefs of Conscience which he affected, and his pretended Reverence for an Oath, could not acquit him from being guilty of a great Sin in rashly making

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ing it, but of a still greater, in performing it, by murdering an innocent Person; as I have proved in the Case

Ch.iii. §.xxviii.
P. 75.

of *David* and *Nabal*. 2. As to the *Sorrow* which *Herod* expressed, on this Occasion, he was plainly under the Influence of mean, worldly Considerations. The shedding Blood, on such an high Festival, as his *Birth-day*, must be a shocking Interruption of all their Mirth and chearful Entertainment, and a Thing unknown and abhorred, even among the most barbarous Nations: And moreover, besides the *Fear* which he had of *John* himself, as knowing that he was a just Man, and an holy, he no less (and probably much more) feared the Multitude, because they accounted him as a Prophet. But yet, having pledged his Honour, before all his noble Guests, and confirmed his Promise with an Oath, he was ashamed, in their Presence, not to fulfil it, but not afraid, in the Presence of God, to commit a most execrable Murder, for the Performance of a rash Oath, which (if Conscience had had its due Regard with him) he ought, and would have repented of, rather than performed it. But,

3. History informs us, how remarkably the Death of this holy Man was, by Divine Providence, avenged upon the Author and Instruments

respectively: *Viz.* That *Herod* did not only miscarry in Wars, but was deprived of his Tetrarchate by the Emperor *Caligula*, and banished into

Whitby, on
Matth. xiv. 11.
Stack's Hist.
Bib. fol. 1309.

France, together with his incestuous Consort *Herodias*: And that her Daughter, passing a frozen River, slipp'd in thro' the ice, which sever'd her Head from her Body. And, 4. From this, and the two other Cases before-mention'd, we may learn,

“ that an Oath, so indefinitely made, is
“ ever to be understood, with its just

Sanderfon, as
before.

“ Exceþtion, and to be extended unto those Things
 “ only, which in Probability were thought upon
 “ during the Act of Swearing ; and not unto those,
 “ which if they had then been thought upon, the
 “ Oath had not been taken.”

§. III. AFTER this, we come to the Censure,
 which our Lord passed upon the *Pharisees* and *Scribes*,
 for their *transgressing the Commandment of God by their*

Exod. xx. 12.

Deut. v. 16.

St. Matth. xv.

4, &c.

St. Mark vii.

10, &c.

Tradition. For, whereas God commanded, saying, Honour thy Father and Mother, &c. they said, If a Man shall say to his Father or Mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a Gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his Father or his Mother, he shall be free; and they suffered him no more to do ought for his Father or his Mother; thus making the Word of God of none Effect. Where we are to understand, 1. That Corban does not imply every, or any, Gift, but such only as were devoted to God. For there was a solemn Form of devoting, very frequent among the Jews, but contrary to Charity, to bind themselves by Oath or Execration, not to give any thing to the Relief of their Parents, as having devoted all their Effects to the Treasury of the Temple for divine Uses. 2. That whatever was thus devoted was not allowed to be applied to any other Uses (how necessary soever) according to the Superstition of the *Pharisees*; who held such Vows and Oaths to be lawful and obligatory, tho' expressly contrary to the *Fifth Commandment*. 3. That such unnatural

Hammond, on
Matth. xv.

Refusal to provide for needy Parents, is, in Effect, to deny the Faith, and be worse than an Infidel! And, 4. That all such Vows or Oaths, whereby Men covenant, to neglect to do any thing which the Laws of God or Nature

1 Tim. v. 8.

re-

require, are in themselves unlawful, and consequently oblige only to Repentance.

§. IV. WHEN the blessed Jesus was brought before Caiaphas, the High Priest, tho' the Chief Priests and Elders, and all the Council, sought false Witness against him, to put him to Death, yet still their Witness agreed not together, suffi-

St. Matthew
xxvi. 59, &c.
St. Mark xiv.
56, &c.

ciently, to convict him of any capital Crime: And he held his Peace, and answered nothing. But Caiaphas, to make sure Work, had a Question in Reserve, which he knew would do the Business effectually in that Assembly, if answered in the Negative, to condemn him as an Impostor, or in the Affirmative, as a Blasphemer. Therefore, (says he) I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God? And thereupon, Jesus immediately saith unto him, Thou hast said;—I am. From whence we may observe,

1. That in Judicial Oaths among the Jews, the Custom was not for the Person who came under the Obligation of an Oath, to pronounce the Words of Swearing with his own Mouth; but an Oath was exacted from him by the Magistrate, or lawful Superior; and so he became bound to answer, by bearing the Voice of Adjuration, (according to the Septuagint,)

Lev. 5. 1.

in as solemn a manner, as if he had sworn in a prescript Form of Words. And, therefore, 2.

' The holy Jesus, being adjured by so sacred a

" Name, would not now refuse to an-

" swer, lest it might not consist

Bp. Taylor's
Life of Jesus,
Part iii. fol.

" with that Honour which is due to

" it, and which he always paid: And

" that he might neither despise the Authority of

" the High-Priest, nor, upon so solemn Occasion,

" be wanting to that great Truth, which he came

" down

“ down to Earth to persuade to the World. And,
 “ when three such Circumstances occur, it is enough
 “ to open our Mouths, tho’ we let in Death :”
 For so did our Lord. Whereby he hath taught
 us, also, 3. That when he gave that Prohibition,
St. Matt. v. 34. *Swear not at all*, he did not intend to
 forbid Judicial Oaths, (which the
Jews, to whom he spake, had it not in their Pow-
 er to avoid;) but all voluntary, vain, and unneces-
 sary Oaths only : For otherwise, he himself would
 not have answered to the Adjuration of the High-
 Priest.

§. V. THEN follows the Case of *St. Peter* ;
 whose several Denials of his Lord and
 Master were fearfully followed with
 Curses, Imprecations, Oaths, and Ab-
 jurations. For when he heard him-
 self reported to be *one of Jesus’s Dis-*
ciples, he did not only, over and over,
deny him, (as his Master had foretold
 he would,) and that too *with an Oath*, but, when
 some of the People *confidently affirmed* the same,
then began he to Curse and to Swear, saying, I know
not the Man of whom ye speak. From which Case
 we may discover, 1. The Weakness of human
 Nature, in the best of Men, left to themselves,
 without the Support of Divine Grace ; which may
 teach *him that thinketh he standeth*, to
take heed lest he fall. 2. The Danger
 of a presumptuous Confidence in our own Strength,
 which is the ready way to provoke the Lord to leave
 us in the Day of Trial. 3. The Danger of associ-
 ating with such Companies or Parties, as may be
 apt to tempt or surprise us into Sin, whereby many
 well-disposed People have been often drawn in, to
 practise or profess what their very Souls, at the
 same time, have justly held in Abhorrence. 4. The
 dread-

-- xxvi. 69. &c.

St. Mark xiv.

66, &c.

St. John xviii.

16, &c.

St. Luke xxii.

55, &c.

1. Cor. x. 12.

dreadful Effects of the slavish Fear of suffering some real, or imaginary, temporal Hardships or Inconveniences; which is too apt to influence Men to the denial of their true Principles, and the Abjuration of the Cause, or Person, which they in their Hearts, have most justly espoused: For “a
 “ silly Woman, a Word, or even a
 “ Look, is able to overturn the chief *Quessnell, on St.*
 “ Pillars of the Church, if they are *Mark xiv. 70.*
 “ not well founded upon the Love of God, and
 “ the Contempt of the World, and of all its false
 “ Advantages.” 5. How dangerous it is, not to
 resist the very Beginning of a Temptation to Fall: For if we give way, and comply ever so little, *Satan* will be sure to repeat and reinforce his Assaults, till he casts us down. Thus *Peter*, having *denied* his Master and his Cause, at first, with a Lye, proceeded at last to abjure him with horrid Oaths and Imprecations upon himself: For so the Original Word (*καταναδηναιρίζω*) used in *St. Matthew's* Gospel, “ imports a Cursing and
 “ Damning of himself, an Imprecation of God's Wrath, and of Separation from the Presence and Glory of God, upon himself, if he knew the Man!” And, what less than this doth any one, who takes an Oath, and attests the Truth of it with those solemn Words *So HELP ME GOD! &c.* if the thing he so swears be false, unjust, or even doubtful? 6. How many, who profess themselves *Christians*, do “ not only
 “ deny *Christ*, as *Peter*, but betray
 “ him, as *Judas*? Who sell their *J. Shower's*
 “ Consciences for temporal Profit, *Serm. on Luke*
 “ and the Gain of a little Money: *xxii. 60. &c.*
 “ Who undervalue the Blood of the Redeemer,
 “ and all the Riches of his Grace, for *Thirty Pieces*
 “ of Silver; preferring their Ease, and Honour and
 “ Wealth,

“ Wealth, before his Presence and Favour ! ” For indeed, “ What is our Refusal to fol-

Quesnell on St.

John xviii. 17.

“ low the Maxims of the Gospel, but “ a plain *Denial of Christ*, and a dis-

“ owning ourselves to be *his Disciples* ? ” But then,

7. As *St. Peter*’s sad Fall ought to be a Warning to us against the like Transgression ; so may his speedy Recovery be a comfortable Reflection to those, who, thro’ Weakness, Surprise, or Want of due Consideration, have thus unhappily fallen, That, if their Hearts be sincere, our gracious Lord will not be wanting on his Part, to afford them the proper Means of Recollection, and by his Divine Grace, raise them up again by an unfeigned Repentance. For, He, who, in the midst of all the Calumnies and false Accusations, the barbarous Outrages and Insults, which he suffered, in and by the Hands of his own most inveterate Enemies, did not forget to *turn and look upon Peter*, with an Eye of Mercy and Compassion, which melted his Heart, and recalled him to a sincere Repentance, and a true Sense of his Duty for the future, cannot, surely, be less mindful of his poor Followers, now he is in Heaven, than when he was here on Earth. But *lastly*, It must be carefully remembered, That *Peter* did (as every true Penitent, in the like Case, ought to) give the most demonstrative Proofs of his Sincerity, during the Remainder of his Life. “ The Book of *Acts* in-

Stanhope, on

St. Luke xxii.

60, &c.

“ forms us at large, what noble Re-

“ paration he afterwards made for

“ this Breach of Faith ; how vigo-

“ rous and bold he was in Preaching ; how for-

“ ward, and even joyful, in Suffering for the Gos-

“ pel of his once-denied (and *abjured*) Lord.”

§. VI. IN the Case of *Ananias* and his Wife *Sapphira*, there is some Doubt, whether they had

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consecrated and devoted their Estate to the Honour of God, and the Necessities of the Church, by any solemn Vow. This, however, is clear enough, that whereas others, in those pious and charitable Times, generously sold their Lands and Possessions, and brought the Money to the Apostles, so that *Distribution was made unto every* *Acts v. 32, &c.*

Man according as he had need: These conspired together, to make a Shew of the same *Christian* Charity, in the Sale of their Land, *bringing a certain Part* only of the Price. — *v. 1, &c.*

to the Apostles for the Use of the Poor, but, at the same Time, pretending, and solemnly affirming it to be the *Whole* Price for which they had *sold the Land*. By this Artifice they hoped to gain the Reputation of zealous and charitable Persons, tho' by an Attempt to deceive the inspired Apostles. But they were made to know, that such “ a deliberate and concerted Act *Quisnell.*

“ of Dissimulation is an Abuse of the Light of the “ Holy Ghost, and includes the Sin of *Blasphemy* “ against him ; ” for which they both were miraculously struck dead upon the Spot ! Whence, by the Way, we may observe, That the Doctrine of *Mental Reservation* was not yet received : For, otherwise, they could not have been convicted, if it had been allowable to plead, that they had a secret Reservation in their Minds, which did limit and expound their Words.

§. VII. NEXT to this is the Case of *St. Stephen*; who having *done great Wonders and Miracles among the People*, insomuch that all the Adversaries, who disputed with him, *were not able to resist the Wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake*, they had Recourse to the last Efforts of a baffled Cause ; prosecuting him to Death by false Informations and Perjury, whom they could not confute by fair Ar-

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guments.

Acts vi. 11, &c. guments. They suborned, and set up false Witnesses, charging him with having spoke blasphemous Words against Moses, and against God, against the Temple and the Law!

And, it is too well known, how seldom such Instruments fail, in such Hands, when they are set up to destroy the Innocent; as hath been already noted in the Case of *Naboth*.

§. VIII. THE next we meet with, is that where we read of *St. Paul's* Departure from *Corinth*, and sailing thence into *Syria*, and with him

Acts xviii. 18, Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his Head in *Cenchrea*, for he had a Vow.

Where we must observe, 1. That it was not *St. Paul* himself, but *Aquila*, who had shorn his Head, and was therefore left behind, at *Cenchrea*.

Hammond. And, 2. That his Vow, here mentioned, was, undoubtedly, that which was made according to the Law of the *Nazarites*, which we have already taken notice of, in its proper Place.

§. IX. WHILE *St. Paul* was preaching, and working Miracles, at *Ephesus*, there were certain of the Vagabond Jews, Exorcists, (and, among them, seven Sons of one *Sceva*, a Jew and chief of the Priests) who took upon them to call over them which had evil Spirits the Name of the

Acts xix. 13, Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus, whom *Paul* preacheth! " But

" here it pleased God, to put a visible Difference

" between those that apply'd this powerful Name

" regularly, and with Commission,

Stackb. Hist. " and others, who, of their own

Bib. fol. 1551. " Heads, and for ill Designs, dared

" to usurp it." For, the evil Spirit answered and said,

said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? And the Man, in whom the evil Spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that House naked and wounded.

§. X. WHEN St. Paul arrived the last Time at Jerusalem, we find, that he took four Men which had a Vow on them, and the next Day, purifying himself with them, entered

Acts xxi. 18, &c.

into the Temple, to signify the Accomplishment of the Days of Purification, until that an Offering should be offered for every one of them. In which Case we may observe, 1. That, after he had given the Church a just Occasion to glorify God, by declaring particularly what Things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his Ministry, St. James (the Metropolitan of that Province) and all the Elders present in that Synod, represented to him, how many Thousands of Jewish Converts, all zealous of the Law, were informed, that he taught all the Jews, which were among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses and his Law: And therefore, they advised him to this Conformity, as an Expedient to convince them, that he himself also walked orderly, and kept the Law.

2. That the Expedient here proposed, is generally understood, to have been the Vow of the Nazarites, herein before explained. For, “ among the Jews,

Chap. ii. §. xii. p. 56.

“ it was accounted a kind of meritorious Action, to contribute to the Expence of the Sacrifices and Offerings, which those who had

Stackb. Hist. Bib. fol. 1560.

“ taken upon them a Vow of Nazaritism, were to make, when the Time of their Vow came to be accomplished.” And, 3. That, as it was not unlawful, in the Bishop and Clergy, to propose that Expedient for Peace, while the Jews Temple

was yet standing, and the Rites thereunto belonging, consequently, not abrogated; so neither was it unbecoming the Character of *St. Paul*, to comply with it, as a Thing, in itself, Indifferent, not Necessary. For, the Canons and Constitutions of every national Church were always of Authority to bind all who either lived or sojourned within the Bounds of that District: Insomuch, that, if an Apostle, or Bishop of another Church, came among them, he was obliged to conform to the Canons and Discipline of the national Church, during his Abode there. Thus *St. Paul* conformed here to the Canons of *Jerusalem*, while he sojourned there; tho' he would not suffer this very Canon to be observed at *Antioch*, and *blamed* even *Gal. ii. 11, &c.* *St. Peter* himself, for observing the same there.

§. XI. Now we meet with a wicked Association and *Conspiracy*, entered into by *more than forty* Jewish Zealots, who *banded together*, *Acts xxiii. 12, &c.* *and bound themselves under a Curse, saying, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul!* Where 'tis observable, 1. Who were thus associated in this *Conspiracy*: Even *Saducees*, who denied the *Resurrection*; and on that Account had a great *Dissention* with the *Pharisees*, who therefore seemed to favour him. 2. The Ground of their Malice, the same which had raised the Persecution against *St. Stephen*, because they found themselves unable to defend their corrupt Principles and Practices against the Truth of the Doctrine which he preached. 3. The diabolical Craft and Cruelty, by which they conspired to effect it: They proposed to the *Chief-Priests and Elders*, to solicit the *chief Captain*, to bring *Paul* down to them, under a Pretence, as
though

though they would inquire something more perfectly concerning him, in the way of a fair Trial ; and (then, said these bloody Conspirators,) *we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him !* 4. The woful Degeneracy of their ancient Constitution, when their *Chief-Priests and Elders, with the Council, or Sanhedrim*, could so readily agree to, and combine in, such a monstrous *Conspiracy* against the Innocent ; and all this too, under the specious Colour of great ZEAL FOR THEIR RELIGION ! But, the Usurpation of the Priesthood, and the Abuse of sacred Things, had now led the *Jews* into all Sorts of Wickedness : They had almost filled up the Measure of their Sins ; and their final Destruction was near approaching ! And, 5. Tho' the Devil's Designs would never miscarry for want of Instruments, great and small, who are ready enough to serve his Purpose ; yet they cannot proceed, without the Divine Permission : So that, whenever it pleaseth God to interpose, he can easily find the Means to discover and prevent them, as he made his PROVIDENCE manifest in the Case before us. As to those desperate Conspirators, we do not read what became of them, whether they perished by Famine, or fell under the Alternative of their own dreadful *Anathema*, without Repentance.

§. XII. LET us now consider St. Paul's own Practice, with respect to the Use of God's holy Name : And we shall find him frequently expressing himself in such Terms, as cannot reasonably be denied to be formal *Oaths*. Sometimes he expressly calls *God to Witness*, or *Record*, the Truth of what he says : Sometimes he speaks positively, *Before God*, *I lie not ! — I say the Truth in Christ*, *I lie not ; my Conscience also bearing me*

Rom. i. 9.

2 Cor. i. 23.

Phil. i. 8.

1 Thess. ii. 5, 10.

Gal. i. 20.

Rom. ix. 1.

1 Tim. ii. 7.

Witness

2 Cor. ix. 31. *Witness in the Holy Ghost! — The God*
 1 Thess. v. 27. *and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
 1 Tim. v. 21. *which is blessed for evermore, knoweth,*
 — vi. 13. *that I lie not! And sometimes also*
 2 Tim. iv. 1. *making use of that solemn authorita-*
tive Form of Adjuration, I charge you by the Lord!
—before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the
elect Angels!—or other such-like Forms of speak-

See §. iv. p. 117.

ing, well understood among the Jewish
Converts, whereby the Party adjured
was laid under as solemn an Obligation, as if he
had uttered the Words of an Oath with his Mouth.
All which evidently proves, that all Swearing is
not, in itself, absolutely unlawful, as certain mo-
dern Fanaticks mistake it to be, under the Gospel:
For here we have the Authority of the divinely-in-
spired Apostle, St. Paul, to warrant it;
as I have before produced that of our
blessed Saviour himself, and come now to add that
of an holy Angel also, as next followeth.

§. XIII. ST. JOHN, in his *Revelation*, tells us,
 he saw an *Angel stand upon the Sea,*
and upon the Earth, which lifted up
his Hand to Heaven, and sware by Him
that liveth for ever and ever, &c. with

Rev. x. 5, 6.
 Chap. i. §. iii.
 p. 32.

great Solemnity, according to an antient Form,
 herein-before taken notice of.

AND now, having gone through all that occurs
 to my Observation, relating to the Law and Hi-
 story of *Oaths and Vows, Leagues and Covenants,*
 recorded in the Holy Scriptures of the *Old and*
New Testament, as well as in the *Apocrypha,* I shall
 sum up the whole in a short and (I hope) not
 unseasonable DISSERTATION.

D I S.

DISSERTATION

UPON

OATHS and VOWS, LEAGUES and COVENANTS.

§. I. **T**HERE needs but little to be said of the *Importance* of a Subject, in which People of all Ranks, high and low, rich and poor, are, or may be, more nearly concerned, than many of them seem to be well aware of. Their great Unhappiness is, to act, as if they thought, the taking an *Oath*, on certain Occasions, a Matter of *meer Form*, or only a Civil Qualification, required, as a *Thing of Course*, on their entering upon an Office or employment.

To correct which gross Mistake, is the sole End of this Undertaking: Wherein, 'tis to be hoped, the honest and well-disposed Reader will find sufficient Reason to be convinced, that *Oaths* and *Vows* are of too solemn and sacred a *Nature*, to be taken or made, without the most serious and mature Advice and Deliberation beforehand; or to be observed afterwards with more, or less, Regard, than is their proper Due, in Respect of *Obligation*.

§. II. Now, an *Oath* and a *Vow* differ properly in this, That, whereas an OATH is a solemn Invocation of, or Appeal to, God, as the *Witness* of the Truth, and consequently the Avenger of the Falsehood, of what we assert or promise to *one another*; a Vow is a Promise made unto *God himself*, of something which is supposed to be acceptable to him. Yet, in this Respect, however, they agree, That both

See Chap. ii.
§. xiii. p. 57.

of

of them are *Religious Acts*, or Parts of such holy Worship, as is due unto *God* alone.

§. III. THIS is so clearly manifested, by the general Consent of all Nations, even where they had no other Guide, but the meer Light of Nature, that we need no more, than a Reference to the several Proofs herein-before laid together; to demonstrate,

Chap. i. p. 31,
&c.

how sacred and inviolable the Religion of *Oaths*, or *Vows*, has universally been held, both before the Promulgation of the Law of God, by *Moses*, and since, among those who were Strangers to that Divine Institution. For, 'tis evident, from good Reason itself, that an *Oath*, when deliberately weighed, and devoutly taken, has a Tendency to the Honour of God, as it naturally implies a Reverence of his Name, and an Acknowledgment of his Divine Attributes: On which Account it is, that the truly pious Man is, by the *Psalmist*, described under this Character, of *One*

Psal. lxxiii. 11. that sweareth by God, in Token of Reverence and Respect to his holy Name; the very

Heb. vi. 16.

End and Design of Swearing an *Oath*, being for Confirmation of the Truth, and Determination of doubtful Controversies and Contentions, common between Man and Man, as well as for the better Assurance of the Faithfulness and Allegiance, which is due to Sovereign Princes from their Natural Subjects by Birth, and from their Tributaries by fair and lawful Contract. And that such Use and Practice thereof was allowed and approved of, by God himself; appears, not only by the general Custom of the Patriarchs, and other holy Men of old, but even by his own unerring Example, and that of his holy Angels, and inspired Prophets and Apostles, as well as by the expresse *Laws*, which he

Chap. ii, iii, iv,
v.

hath

hath given to his own peculiar People, for the Rule of their Conduct in this Particular.

§. IV. AS TO OATHS, they are commonly distinguished into *Assertory* and *Promisory*: The former of which relates to the Time past or present; as when we *affirm*, of any Thing, that it was, or is, such as we relate it: The latter, to the Time to come; as when we *promise* upon Oath, to do a Thing, or not to do it, as the Nature, or different Circumstances, of the Case may require. And yet, 'tis certain, That the Swearer, in both Kinds of Oaths, is bound in Conscience to the Performance of some Duty for the Future: For, "whosoever sweareth, obligeth himself, *ipso facto*, to manifest the Truth, in that which he is about to say, whether it be, in a Matter past or present, by an Assertory, or, in a future Matter, by a promisory Oath."

Sanderfon of
Oaths, Lect. i.
§. 14.

§. V. BUT, the greatest Care ought to be taken of both, that we offend not against the Truth; since, otherwise, we may incur the Guilt of PERJURY, in either. For,

I. IN an ASSERTORY OATH, a Man may be guilty of PERJURY, divers ways: As for Instance,

1. IF he "swears to the Truth of any Fact, which, at the same Time, he certainly knows to be false." For, "if then *he* knows, there be not perfect Truth in what *he* says, this is a flat *Perjury*, a downright being forsworn." And, so is he,

Wake's Disc.
of Swearing.
1696. p. 15.
Whole Duty
of Man, *Sund.*
iv. §. i.

2. IF he swears to the Truth of any Thing which is but *doubtful*. For, "it matters not, whether a Man certainly *knows* what he swears to be False: It is

Wake, *ibid.*

" enough, that he does not *know it to be True.*" For, " tho' the Thing should *happen* to be True, W.D.M. *ibid.* " yet it brings upon *him* the Guilt of Perjury : For, *he* swears at a *Venture*, and the Thing might, for ought *he* knew, " be as well false as true ; whereas *we* ought never " to swear any thing, the Truth of which *we* do " not CERTAINLY KNOW." For, tho', in such an Oath, there may be no Malice of Intention, yet, the Want of that *Certitude* of the Mind, which is necessary to the speaking of Truth, is such an essential Defect in the very Act, that the loosest of the Casuists agree in censuring this rash kind of Swearing to be a MORTAL SIN !

3. If he " do not use great Plainness and Simplicity in Oaths, but answer *equivocally* and doubtfully, or with " *Reservation* of something in his " Mind, thinking thereby to save the Truth of " what *he* doth say." — For, " this may be laid " down for a certain Rule, That all Departure " from the *Simplicity* of an Oath is a Degree of " *Perjury* ; and a Man is never a whit the less " forsworn, because his Perjury is a little finer, " and more *artificial*, than ordinary." Or,

4. If he " *prevaricates*, in any the least *Circumstance* of what he delivers and confirms with " an Oath ;" either by swearing to a Matter as *certain*, of which he has only a *probable* Assurance ; or affirming That upon his *own Knowledge*, which he has received only upon the Credit of *some other* ; by *adding* any thing to the Truth of what he relates ; or by willingly *concealing* any thing that may give Light, or Weight to, or, in any other *Circumstance*, notably affect, the Point to which he

Wake, *ibid.*
p. 16.

swears : " In all these, and the like " Cases, he, who, knowingly and de-

“designedly, *prevaricates*, or otherwise departs,
“but in the least Tittle, from the Truth of what
“he delivers, forswears himself, tho’ what he says
“should, in the main, be never so true.” And,
so likewise,

II. IN a PROMISORY OATH, a Man may be
guilty of the same Crime, either,

1. IF he “promises, upon his Oath, *Ibid.* p. 17.

“to do That which, at the same
“Time, he *resolves*, not to perform.”

2. IF he “swears to do any thing, which is ap-

“parently beyond his *Ability*; and
“which he cannot but be sensible is *Ibid.* p. 18.

“so:” Or even “what he is not *Till:ij.* *ibid.*

“morally and reasonably *certain*, he shall be able
“to perform.”

3. IF he “swears to do any thing, *Wake,ib.* p. 19.

“which he knows, it is *not lawful*
“for him to do.”

4. IF he “swears to do any thing *Ibid.* p. 21.

“contrary to what he had *before sworn*
“to do; his former Oath still continuing to
“oblige.”

5. IF he takes such an Oath, “in a *Sense diffe-*

“rent from that which *he* knows, he, *W.D.M. ibid.*

“to whom *he* makes the Promise, un- *§. 2.*

derstands it.” For, as one of the

main *Ends* of an Oath, is to make Men *confide* in

one another, it ought to be taken and interpreted

in such a *Sense*, as is most likely to answer that

End. Or,

6. IF he “afterwards *change his Mind*, or, by

“any culpable Neglect, *omit* to make *Wat,ib.* p. 22.

“good his Promise, or render him-

“self incapable of doing it.” Nay, if he *endea-*

vours, or only contrives, to *evade* the Obligation,

and to break his lawful Promise, so sworn, tho’

he should not be able effectually to avoid the due Performance, yet he is so far *intentionally* guilty of Perjury.

III. BUT, this we must farther observe, with respect either to *assertory* or *promisory Oaths*,

I. THAT, if a Man "shall, by any Means, " knowingly and purposely, *seduce*, *Ibid.* p. 25, 26. " *persuade*, *affright*, or otherwise " *tamper* with, any other Person, to *forswear* him- " self, he will, by his so doing, become *Partaker* " in the Perjury, and render himself even *more* " *guilty*, than he, who, by his Encouragement or " *Instigation*, forswears himself. Nay, farther,

2. " HE who *exalts* an Oath of another, where- " by he either certainly knows, or may reasonably " *suppose*, that the Person, of whom he requires it, " will *forswear* himself, does, by that Means, if " not involve himself in an *equal* Guilt, yet ren- " der himself not much less criminal, than he who " commits the Perjury; and must expect to ren- " der an Account, not only for the Dishonour, " which thereby is done to *God*, but also for his " *Uncharitableness* towards his *Neighbour's* Soul!"

§. VI. As to the *Guilt* of PERJURY, it can scarce be capable of any Aggravation. It is such a complicated Sin, as, at once, is an open and barefac'd Affront and Defiance, to the Majesty, Power, Omnipotence, Truth and Justice of *God*, and a Mean to interrupt and overthrow all the Peace and Security, all the Right and Property of *Mankind* in the World, as well as one of the most desperate Offences a Man is capable of committing against him- self.

IN Order therefore, if possible, to awaken the Consciences of those, who have been, any way, thus guilty, to a due Sense of their *Sin and Danger*, so as to move them to a sincere *Repentance* for what

is past, and to deter them, and others who are happily yet free from it, from presuming to commit the like for the future, let us briefly, but seriously, consider,

1. How heinous it is in the Sight of Almighty God. And this is evident, from what he solemnly declared from Heaven with his own Mouth, in the Third Commandment, That he will

not hold him guiltless, that taketh his Name in vain. Where *Perjury* is

Exod. xx. 7.
Deut. v. 11.

principally prohibited; tho' all other profane, light, vain, customary and unnecessary Oaths are also comprehended. And the *Heinousness* of this Sin is distinguished, by this particular Commination: For, such it is plainly to be understood, that, whom *the Lord will not hold guiltless*, he will most assuredly, and severely, PUNISH. Nay, "'tis very observable,

"that there is no *Threatning* added *Tillotf. ibid.*

"to any other Commandment, but

"to this and the *Second*; intimating to us, that,

"next to *Idolatry*, and the Worship of a false

"God, *Perjury* is one of the greatest Affronts that

"can be offered to the Divine Majesty." And,

as to the Punishment of those who are guilty of this Sin, it is clearly enough represented by the Prophets: As in the Case of *Zedekiah*, before stated; of whose *Perjury* 'tis said,

Shall he prosper? Shall he escape that doeth such Things? — As I live, saith the Lord God, — Surely, mine Oath that he hath despised, — will I recompense upon his own Head, &c. And of

Introd. §. iv.
and Chap. iii.
§. 66.
Ezek. xvii. 15,
&c.

others in general, we find him threatening, to come near to them to Judgment, and to be a swift Witness against false Swearers; *Mal. iii. 5.*

and, under the Emblem of a flying Roll, denouncing his Curse, which shall enter into the House of him

Zech. v. 4. him that sweareth falsely by his Name, and shall remain in the midst of his House, and shall consume it, with the Timber thereof, and the Stones thereof! Thus David, where he enumerates the Qualifications of those unhappy Persons, who may be accounted worthy Members of God's Church here, and, as such, admitted to dwell with him in Heaven hereafter, reckons, among the rest, him that sweareth, to his own Hurt, and changeth not; or (as it is expressed in our Psalter-Version) him that sweareth unto his Neighbour, and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own Hindrance: By which distinguishing Character he plainly implies, that all those who do not make good their Oaths (supposing the same to be lawful and duly qualified) shall never be admitted Members of either. To which we may add, from St. John's Revelation, That, if none shall, in any wise, enter into the heavenly Jerusalem, who maketh a Lie, the Exclusion will be still stronger against all who make a false Oath! Yea, and even "among the Heathen, it was always reckoned one of the greatest of Crimes, and which they did believe, God did not only punish upon the guilty Person himself, but upon his Family and Posterity, and, many times, upon whole Nations; as the Prophet also tells us, that *Because of Swearing* THE LAND MOURNETH."

2. How injurious it is to the common Peace and Happiness of Mankind in general. It cannot be denied, that whatsoever does, in its own Nature, tend to overthrow the mutual Trust and Confidence between Man and Man, (without which no State or Community, great or small, can possibly subsist) must be, in the highest Degree, *injurious* to all human

human Society; because it naturally tends to the immediate Ruin and Destruction of it. But, *Perjury* manifestly does all this, in the most outrageous and audacious Manner; insomuch as it violates the strongest Security, that one Man is capable of giving to another, of his Truth and Sincerity, Honour and Honesty. "And therefore, the *false Swearer* is so far from deserving *Wake, ib. p. 36.*
 "any *Favour* of Men, that, were he
 "dealt with as he ought to be, he should be accounted to have FORFEITED all Right to the
 "Benefits of Society; should be treated as a kind
 "of *Outlaw* in the Common-wealth, an Enemy
 "to Truth and Justice, to Peace and Property,
 "and no longer under the Protection of those
 "Laws, by which others are preserved in their
 "Rights and Liberties." And, consequently,

3. How dangerous it must be to *themselves*, will necessarily follow, when thus it is evident, that he, who is guilty of this Sin, is neither worthy to live here upon *Earth*, nor, without a very extraordinary Repentance, capable of Admission hereafter into the Kingdom of *Heaven*. So that, from the whole, we must allow this Conclusion to be just,
 "That there is hardly any Sin, by which a Man
 "does so directly wound his own
 "Soul, and cut himself off from all *Ibid. p. 31.*
 "the Hopes of Salvation, as by this: Because, in
 "this Sin, a Man gives up all Claim to God's
 "Mercy; nay, more, desires God so to deal with
 "him, as what he says is *true*; that is, in other
 "Words, to DAMN HIM, if it be not! And, what
 "can he, who has done this, pretend to, or even
 "hope for, at God's Hand, who has already given
 "Verdict against himself, and, with his own
 "Mouth, pronounced, or rather *chosen*, his own
 "Doom?" For, such a one (as another great
 Prelate

Abp. Herring's
Sermon, 1745.
p. 12. in 8vo.

“ Prelate expresseth it) is in so much
“ worse Circumstances than any o-
“ ther Sinner, that one may almost
“ say, he has not so much as left
“ himself a *Reserve* in the Goodness and Compas-
“ sion of God Almighty !” After all which,
there cannot be any Necessity for more Arguments,
to persuade any sober thinking Christian, to dread
the Commission of a Sin, which is evidently at once
so *heinous* in itself, so *injurious* to our Neighbour,
and so *ruinous*, not only to our future Happiness
in the *other* World, but even to our present Peace
and Security in *this*.

§. VII. BUT, besides this of downright *Perjury*,
there are (as I have before intimated) other Kinds
of *Oaths*, by which God's holy Name is disho-
noured, and the Party himself thereby, in like
Manner, rendered obnoxious to Divine Vengeance.
Such is that profane Custom of light and *vain*
Swearing and Cursing (chiefly prevailing among the
basest and most profligate of the Mob) in their
ordinary Discourse, or most trifling Affairs. A
Sin, whereby they *devote* themselves to the Devil,
GRATIS, without so much as the Excuse of any
Temptation, either of Pleasure, Profit or Reputa-
tion ; and yet (alas !) 'tis become so habitual among
the Many, that they are often heard to vent their
shocking *Blasphemies*, without thinking, or know-
ing, *how, why, where* or *when* they do it ! Though
some there are indeed, who seem proud to *invent*
new and unheard-of Oaths and Imprecations, as if
they were ambitious to excel each other, in the Ser-
vice of their *infernal Master*, of whom they learn
it, and proud to publish themselves to be *his Disci-
ples*. But, however light a Sin this may be thought,
by some People, in Comparison with the foregoing,
its *Heinousness* will soon be discovered, if they'll be
pleased but seriously to consider,

I. THAT

1. THAT it is not only an open and daring Violation of the Divine Precepts, both of the Law and the Gospel, but an Expression of the utmost Contempt of the Great King of Kings, boldly to call upon Him to be a Witness, or Judge, in such trivial Matters, as a sober, modest Man, would blush to mention, in the Presence of an earthly Superior, or even of a serious Neighbour.

2. THAT it is a grievous Offence to all sober and pious Hearers, and, at the same Time, justly reflects a Scandal upon the Person himself who useth it; "*Oaths*, in common Discourse, being so far from confirming a Man's Word, " that with wise Men they much *Tillotson* as be-
" *weaken* it: For, common swearing fore.
" (if it have any serious Meaning at all) argues in
" a Man a perpetual *Distrust* of his own Reputa-
" tion; and is an Acknowledgment, that he thinks
" his bare *Word* not to be worthy of Credit." And,
moreover,

3. THAT the Progression is natural, from a common Custom of *vain swearing*, to *Perjury* it-
self. " He that, by the Use of swear- W. D. M. ib.
" ing, hath made Oaths so familiar to § 7.
" him, will be likely to take the dread-
" fullest Oath without much Consideration. For,
" how shall he that swears hourly, look upon an
" Oath with any Reverence? - And he that does
" not, it is his *Chance*, not his *Care*, that is to be
" thanked, if he keep from *Perjury*." Which
may be, not improbably, (as some think) the
Meaning of St. *James*, where he gives that vehe-
ment Caution against common swear-
ing, — *Lest ye fall into Hypocrisy*; (for *Jam. v. 12.*
so it is express'd in some very ancient Copies;) as
if he had said, *Lest ye Lie*, and become *perjur'd*,
by accustoming yourselves to rash and inconsiderate
swearing.

§. VIII. HERE, before we proceed any farther, it will be necessary to consider the Words of our blessed Saviour, where he says, *Ye have heard, that it hath been said by (or rather, to) them of old Time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths: But I say unto you, Swear*

not at all; neither by Heaven, for it
Matt. v. 33, is God's Throne; nor by the Earth,
Et.

for it is his Footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the Great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy Head, because thou canst not make one Hair white or black: But, let your Communication be yea, yea, nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of Evil: Agreeable to which also, are those of his Apostle before-cited,

Above all Things, my Brethren, swear
Jam. v. 12. not; neither by Heaven, neither by the Earth, neither by any other Oath: But let your yea be yea, and your nay nay, lest ye fall into condemnation.

Now, as to the Interpretation of these two parallel Texts, the best Expositors seem generally to agree, in these following Particulars:

1. "THAT, in the Command, or rather Prohibition, before us, there is nothing
Wake, Ibid. p. 2. "proposed to us, but what may, if
 2. "not in express Terms, be found in
 "the Law of Moses, yet, by plain and undoubted
 "Consequence, be drawn from the Words of it."

2. THAT it was not only permitted to the Jews in general to swear, "provided that they did it
Ibid. p. 4. "with that due Care, and after such
 "a Manner, as God required them
 "to do it:" But, in many Cases, they were even expressly obliged to do it; and the Use thereof was also well warranted; as I have already observ'd, both by Divine Precepts and Examples.

3. THAT

3. THAT they were allow'd to do this, "when-
ever a just Occasion required their
doing of it : But then, they were *Ibid.* p. 5.
to swear *only* by God's Name, and not by the
Name of any other.

4. THAT God required them, "to take Care,
not to swear by his Name upon *Ibid.* p. 7.
every *ordinary* Occasion, nor with-
out a due Regard to what they did swear by
it.

5. "THAT *Christ* (who came not to destroy the
Law, but to fulfil it, and who, in the very Instance
before us, has effectually done so)
still requires, at least, the same Care, *Ibid.* p. 11.
as to this Matter, of us now, that
God did of the *Jews* heretofore."

6. "THAT, how much soever the Words, if
strictly taken, may seem to favour *Ibid.* p. 41.
such an Opinion ; yet it was never
the Intention of our Lord, utterly to forbid *all*
swearing whatsoever, as simply and absolutely
unlawful under the Gospel." And conse-
quently,

7. THAT the *swearing*, which is here forbidden,
as unlawful to us *Christians*, must be understood
with a Restriction ; as "namely, *First*, *Ibid.* p. 63.

"To *swear at all*, in our common
and private Affairs with one another, when there
is neither any suitable Occasion for it, nor any
Necessity laid upon us so to do : And, *Secondly*,
To use those little affected Modes of swearing,
which Custom and Design brought in among
the *Jews*, and which are still but too much
allow'd of among us at this Day ; and by both
which, the Majesty of God is prophaned, Per-
jury is increased, Faith and Confidence are
lessened among Men, and their immortal
Soul's

"Souls are continually exposed to Ruin and Destruction." And, that this Evangelical Prohibition ought thus to be understood "of Oaths

Tillotf. ibid. "in ordinary Conversation, appears
"from the Opposition, which our

"Saviour makes, *Swear not at all, but let your Communication be yea, yea*: That is, "in your ordinary Commerce and Affairs, do not "interpose *Oaths*, but *Say and Do*." For, otherwise, "I do not see, what good Reason can be "given, why our Saviour should only forbid them "to swear by the *Creatures*, and not much rather "by the Name of *God*; such Oaths being, surely, "of all others, most to be avoided, as being the "most direct Abuse and Prophanation of the Name "of *God*."

§. IX. AND now, to come to a right Understanding of the OBLIGATION of Oaths in general, we must remember the Import of that Phrase used by *Moses*, where he emphatically calls *Numb. xxx. 2.* it the *Binding a Man's Soul with a BOND*; intimating, that he, who takes an Oath, puts his SOUL IN PAWN for the Truth of what he says. And here, the Rule to be more particularly observed, as to all *Affertory Oaths*, is, to *speak the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth*; which is always obligatory and indispensable. But, as to *promisory Oaths*, or *Vows*, we shall find the principal Rules, relating thereto, reducible to three Heads; as they concern the *Matter* of the Oath or Vow itself; the *Person swearing*, or *vowing*; or the *Person to whom*, or by whose Authority, the Oath or Vow is taken or made. And,

I. AS to the MATTER itself, there are divers Cases, in which no Oath or Vow can oblige any Man to a specific Performance; as,

1. If

1. If the Thing promised, or vowed, was, at the Time of making it, known to be out of his Power, and *impossible* for him to make good, he cannot be bound to perform it; because it is a Maxim undeniable, That *no Man is, or can be, obliged to an Impossibility*: In which Case, however, he is bound to endeavour, by an hearty *Repentance*, to make his Peace with *God*; whom he has grievously offended by such a rash Oath or Vow. Or, if the Thing *afterwards* became Impossible, thro' his own Default, or *Neglect* only, he is bound to the like Repentance, for his Non-performance, when it was possible, and in his own Power, to have done it. But, if what was in his Power, and by him honestly intended to be punctually performed, happens to be rendered impossible, by some unlikely or unforeseen *Accident*, then there can be no Doubt, but the Party shall be fairly acquitted, before God and Man, of all Blame or Obligation, tho' the Promise were ever so solemnly confirm'd by Oath or Vow. And,

2. If the Thing promised be such as, in itself, is *Unjust* or *Disbonest*, the Promise is, *ipso facto*, null and void; neither can any *Oath* or *Vow*, *League* or *Covenant*, add any Force of Obligation to it, but only that of *REPENTANCE*: For, nothing can oblige us to do, or excuse us in the doing, whatever is in itself *Unlawful* or *Immoral*.

“ No Man can, by breaking one of the Com-
 “ mandments, acquire to himself
 “ Leave, much less an Obligation, to
 “ break any of the rest. The Rules
 “ of *Morality* are established by God
 “ for ever, and some of them so ne-
 “ cessarily consequent upon his Attributes, as not
 “ to be changed by himself; much less can they
 “ be made of none Effect by any contrary Act of
 “ ours.”

H. Hellier's
 Serm. at Oxf.
 on *Psal.* xv. 4.
 1687, in 4to.
 P. 4

"ours." Thus it is determined by a most profound Casuist, That if a Man shall vow any Thing contrary to *Piety* or *Justice*, *Charity* or *Mercy*,

Bp. Sanderfon's
Case of a rash
Vow, § 5 and
7.

"let such a *Vow* be made, either
"rashly or deliberately, and strength-
"ened with *Oaths* and *Imprecations*,
"in the most direful and solemn
"Manner that can be devised to tie
"it on the faster; yet, it is altogether *null and*
"*invalid*, as to the Effect of Obligation; — be-
"cause it findeth us under the Power of a *former*
"*contrary* Obligation, and hath not itself Power
"sufficient to free or discharge us from the same.

FROM what has been said, we may plainly perceive the Reasonableness of concurring with another pious and venerable Prelate of the last Century, in the following Propositions. That,

Bp. Hall's Se-
ven irrefrag.
Propositions
concer. Oaths
and Cove-
nants, 1639.

1. "No Man may swear, or induce
"another to swear, *Unlawfully*.
2. "IT is no *lawful Oath* that is
"not attended with *Truth*, *Justice*,
"and *Judgment*, (Jer. iv. 2.) The
"first whereof requires, that the
"Thing sworn be *True*; the second, that it be
"*Just*; the third, that it be *not undue* and unmeet
"to be sworn and undertaken.

3. "A PROMISORY Oath, which is to the cer-
"tain Prejudice of another Man's *Right*, cannot
"be attended with *Justice*.

4. "No Prejudice of another Man's *Right* can
"be so dangerous and sinful, as that Prejudice
"which is done to the *Right* of publick and
"*Sovereign Authority*.

5. "THE *Right* of *Sovereign Authority* is
"highly prejudiced, when private Subjects en-
"croach upon it, and shall, upon Suspicion of
"the disavowed Intentions or Actions of their
"Princes,

“ Princes, combine and bind themselves, to enact,
 “ establish, or alter, any Matters concerning Re-
 “ ligion, *without* (and therefore much more, if
 “ *against*) the Authority of their *lawful* Sove-
 “ *reign*.

6. “ A MAN is bound in Conscience, to *reverse*
 “ and *disclaim* that which he was induced *unlaw-*
 “ *fully* to engage himself, by *Oath*, to perform.

7. “ No *Oath* is, or can be of Force, that is
 “ made against a *lawful Oath* formerly taken: So
 “ as he that hath sworn Allegiance to his (*lawful*)
 “ Sovereign, and thereby bound himself to main-
 “ tain the Right, Power, and Authority of his
 “ said Sovereign, cannot, by any *second Oath*, be
 “ tied to do ought to the Infringement thereof;
 “ and, if he have so tied himself, the Obligation is,
 “ *ipso facto*, VOID AND FRUSTRATE.”

THESE *Propositions* were drawn up, by that
 excellent Prelate, with a particular Respect to the
Covenant, at that Time entered into, by rebellious
 Subjects, for altering the Establish'd Religion,
 against the Authority of their undoubted lawful
 Sovereign, to whom they were under the *prior*
Obligation of both natural and sworn Allegiance.
 But, if his View had been more generally extensive,
 he might, and would, have added another, as
irrefragable as any of the former, and grounded
 upon the same Principles, *viz.*

8. THAT any *Oath* taken by Subjects, contrary
 to, or inconsistent with, the *Natural Allegiance*
 which every one owes to his *Rightful Sovereign* by
Birth, is equally to be *reversed* and *disclaimed*, as
 null and void, whether that Allegiance hath been
 confirmed by a *former Oath*, or not. For, so says
 the other learned Prelate, before quoted, (which
 has never been controverted by any sound Casuist)

That

Sanderſon of
Oaths, *Lect.* ii.
§ 11.

That “an OATH maketh not a former Obligation void :—It may lay
“an Obligation where there was none
“before, or ſtrengthen one that lay
“before ; but, it cannot take away that which it
“findeth, or impoſe another which is repugnant
“unto it.—If therefore an OATH be offered unto
“any Man, containing any Thing repugnant unto
“a former Obligation, whether *Natural* or *Ac-*
“*quiſite*, — ſuch an *Oath* no Man can *take*, or,
“taken, *fulfill*, with a ſafe Conſcience ; who doth
“either of theſe, is PERJURED.” For this admits

J. Allen’s Ser.
on *Lev.* xix.
12. 1682, 4to.
p. 8.

not of any Juſtification or Excuse ;
“neither by the Goodneſs of the *In-*
“*tention*, nor the Greatneſs of ſome
“Men’s *Fears*, nor the Piety of their
“*Pretences*, nor their *Zeal* for *Reli-*

“*gion* and the *public Good* ” All which, or a thou-
ſand ſuch-like Motives, are nothing in Compariſon
with the juſt Reproaches, Laſhes, and Terrors of
a guilty *Conſcience* here, and the dreadful Sentence,

Rom. ii. 16.

inevitable, before the Grand Tribunal,
in the Day when God ſhall judge the
Secrets of Men by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Nay, in-
deed, the very *Zeal* which ſome People do make a
Boaſt of for RELIGION, and all the *Fears* and
Jealouſies which they ſo clamourouſly expreſs, on
ſuch Occaſions, againſt *Idolatry*, can be but a meer
Pretence, if what St. *Auſtin* ſays be true, That,

Epift. 154.

without Doubt it is a leſs Sin, to ſwear
truly by a falſe God, than to ſwear
faulſly by the true One ; whereby that great and
learned Father plainly represents PERJURY as a
more *benious* Sin, than even IDOLATRY itſelf !

II. As to the PERSONS themſelves who ſwear
OR

or vow, the Case is also different, with Respect to Obligation. For,

1. THERE are some, who cannot be *capable* of obliging themselves by such a sacred Bond, thro' Defect of a competent *Understanding*; as little *Children*, natural *Fools*, and *Madmen*. For, an Oath or Vow, being an Act of Reason and Judgment, cannot lay any Obligation upon the Conscience of one who has not the Discretion to know what he does.

2. OTHERS there are, who, in certain *Circumstances*, and on some Occasions only, are incapable of the like Obligation; as those in a violent Fit of *Rage*, or Excess of intoxicating *Liquors*, who are in a Sort of *Madness* for the Time: During which 'tis certain, they cannot *swear in Judgment*, nor distinguish properly of what they swear or vow. But, tho' neither of these can be excusable from *Sin* in so doing, and therefore are bound to a serious *Repentance*; yet, when they become *cool and sober*, they ought not to think themselves free from all Obligation; but rather bound to *perform* their Oath or Vow (supposing the *Matter* of it not to be *Unlawful*) tho' somewhat to their own Loss or Inconvenience, as a just Punishment for their former Rashness and Intemperance.

3. THE like may be concluded of an *Oath extorted*, under the Influence of *Fear*, or *Force*, or any other such-like servile Passion, That, "if the *Oath* contain any *unlawful* Thing, it ought not to be taken, by any honest Man, tho' to save his Life, nor, taken, can be *observed* without Sin."—But "if a Matter be ex-
torted by Force, or prevalent Fear,
which is neither *unlawful* nor *injurious* to any Man, but more or less *inconvenient* only unto the Party swearing,—the Party may,

Sanderfon of
Oaths, *Let.*
iv. §. 15.

“ in this Case, lawfully promise, and ratify the “ Promise with an Oath.” And the Oath, so taken, is *obligatory* to Performance : For, the *Force* or *Fear*, is not a sufficient Plea to recede from it ; since it was not such, or so great, as to deprive him of the Use of his Reason, or to hinder him from making a prudent CHOICE.

4. ANOTHER Sort, under the like Incapacity, are those who are not in their own Power, but subject to the *Authority* of others : As a *Wife* to that of her Husband, a *Son* or *Daughter* to their Parents, a *Pupil* to his Tutor or Guardian, a *Servant* to his Master, a *Subject* to his Sovereign, or a *Soldier* to his Captain, or the like ; none of whom can, or ought to *take* an *Oath*, or *vow* a *Vow*, without the Authority or Permission of their respective Superiors. For, he who doth otherwise, with Respect to any Thing which is not, in a *peculiar* Manner, his own Property, but subject to another’s Power or Disposal, “ sinneth in swearing ;

Ibid. §. 5.

“ neither is he obliged to perform “ what he sware : Nay, he is obliged

“ *not* to perform it, unless his Superior, being made acquainted with the Matter, “ give him Leave ; as is at large explained by

Chap.ii. §.13.

“ *Moses*,—in the Case of a *Vow*, or “ *Oath*, (for, as to Obligation, they

P. 57.

“ appear the same) made by a *Virgin*

“ while she is in the House of her *Father*, or by a

“ *Wife* in the House of her *Husband*. — Where

“ we must necessarily conclude, that the *Oath* of

“ one, who is under the Power of another, without

“ the other’s *Consent*, is neither *lawful* nor *obligatory*.” And, more particularly, “ That no

“ *Subject* hath a Right, or Power, to oblige him-

“ self by *Oath*, to the *Prejudice*, and against the

“ *Consent* of the *Sovereign* : And, if any Man hath

“ been

“ been drawn in, and entangled in
 “ such Snares, he must forthwith dis- *Allen, ib. p. 7.*
 “ engage himself, and come off, begging *God’s and*
 “ *the King’s Pardon*, for his Folly and Rashness :
 “ He must remember that he is *pre-engaged* : He
 “ may, and ought to *renounce* the treacherous Oath,
 “ as being Illegal, and unable to lay hold on the
 “ Conscience.”

III. As to the *Person*, to whom the Oath or Vow is made, we may consider him,

1. IN Respect of his *Religion and Morals*. And this we may fairly conclude, in short, That, though, he should happen to be a *wicked Man*, of a *different Communion*, or possibly, an *Heretic*, or an *Infidel*, yet, none of these, or the like, malignant Circumstances, can be a sufficient Excuse, for any Man to break his *lawful Oath*. Of all which we need no other Proofs, than those we have already collected in the foregoing Sheets ; wherein we find, the several Leagues and Covenants, which the *Patriarchs*, and other holy Men of old, made with *Heathens* and *Infidels*, were solemnly ratified with mutual Oaths, and religiously observed, without any Exception or Abatement, on Account of Errors in Religion, or Transgressions in *Morality* ; and how sharply the Kings of *Judah*, who were guilty of breaking their Oaths of Fidelity to the wicked and idolatrous Kings of *Babylon*, were therefore reprov’d by the Prophets of the Lord, and punished with heavy Judgments. And the very Controversy in our own Days, about *not keeping Faith with Hereticks*, is a plain Proof, at least, that it is an abominable Doctrine and Practice, which *neither Side* will undertake to justify or defend, nor dare even so much as to *own*. But, whatever others may say, or think, of upholding RELIGION by taking away the main Support of it, and *breaking God’s Commandments*, ’tis utterly impossible

that ever the *true Religion* should allow of such Practices as overturn the Foundation of all Religion.

2. "WHERE he who *requireth* the Oath, seemeth to have *no Right* so to do, but to *usurp* a Power which belongeth not unto him, it may very well be doubted, whether it be lawful, to *take an Oath*, by him so offered; and, if we take it, whether, and how far, we are *obliged* by it?" For the Solution of which Doubt, it is admitted, "That a pious and constant Man ought, as much as in him lyeth, to *decline all Oaths* imposed by such as have no *lawful Authority*:" And, tho' it is supposed, that such Force may be added to the Command, as cannot be refused, without *extreme Danger*, so that a pious Man, but sadly, heavily, and with some Expressions of Reluctancy, may be prevail'd with to *take* such an Oath; yet still it is with this express Caution and Condition, "provided the Words of the Oath (which seldom happeneth upon this Occasion) contain nothing *Unlawful* in itself, contrary to known *Law*, or derogatory from the *Right* of any *Third Person*: Otherwise, he ought to *refuse* it, even to the Hazard of his LIFE, and to endure the utmost, rather than oblige himself in an unlawful Bond." Agreeable to which Principles is the Judgment of another learned Prelate, who, touching upon the Case of some, who have been possessed with such like Doubts and Scruples in our own Times, says, "It must be confessed, that the PROTESTANT NONJURORS act at least a fair and consistent Part. They have given no *Pledges* of Fidelity to the Government. On the contrary, many have *suffered* in their Fortunes

Sanderfon of
Oaths, *Lect.* iv.
§. 7.

Bp. Gibson's
Serm. on *Psal.*
cx. 43, 44.

“tunes by denying them : And they declare openly, that to give such Pledges, would be to act against their Judgment and *Conscience*.—It may sometimes happen to be a Question among Subjects, Who is their lawful Prince ? or *what* are the strict and precise *Measures* of their legal Obedience ? But certainly, among *Christians*, it is an *unquestionable* Doctrine, That *Oaths*, if unlawful, ought to be *refused* ; or, if lawfully taken, ought to be *kept* : That a Contempt of *Oaths*, as they are solemn Appeals to God, strikes at the very Foundation of all Religion, and has an immediate Tendency to make Mankind *Scepticks* and *Infidels*.”

By a careful Observation of the foregoing Rules, it may easily be understood, That such *Oaths* and *Vows*, as are no way defective, in any of the Particulars herein-before specified, must be valid, and strictly *obligatory* upon the Conscience to a punctual Performance. For, every such Oath or Vow becomes a DEBT, not only to the Party alone to whom, or for whose Benefit, it is made, but even to God also, whose holy Name is invoked to give it a Sanction : Who *will surely require it, and it would be Sin to fail in the Payment of it* ; as he has expressly declared, by *Moses*, in the Law. Parallel to which is that Divine Precept of the wise Solomon, *When thou vowest a Vow, unto God, defer not to pay it : For he hath no Pleasure in Fools ; Pay that which thou hast vowed, &c.* Agreeable also thereto was holy David, both in Principle and Practice, where he says, *Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God : — I will pay thee my Vows, which my Lips have uttered, and my Mouth hath spoken, when I was in Trouble : — I have sworn,*

Chap. ii. §. 16.
p. 60.

Ecl. v. 4, 5-

Psal. lxxvi. 11.
—lxvi. 13. 14.
—cxix. 106.

and

and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous Judgments. And to the same Purpose also is that Divine Admonition of *Solomon*, which relates more particularly to Oaths of Allegiance; *I counsel thee Eccl. viii. 2. to keep the King's Commandment; and that in regard of the Oath of God.*

From which Text we may gather several apposite and useful Instructions. 1. That Obedience is due to the Authority and *Commandment* of THE KING. 2. That, as *Solomon* himself was a *King* by Divine Right, of God's own express Nomination and Appointment, as well as a Prophet and Preacher by Divine Inspiration, so *the King* must be understood here, as in the other Places of holy Scripture, of RIGHTFUL Kings only; for, in all those sacred Records, there is not any Obedience enjoined as due to *Usurpers*. 3. That the Obedience due to *the King*, is in Respect of his *Right*, as being *the Ordinance of God*, without any Distinction or Limitation, as to his Religion, Morals or Administration: So that such a *King's Commandment* is to be religiously obeyed, by every Subject, either *actively* or *passively*; that is to say, ACTIVELY, so far as his *Commandments* are consistent with those of God, (his *only Ruler* and Superior) and PASSIVELY, whenever he may happen to command any thing which cannot be obeyed actively without Sin. 4. That this Duty of Obedience, which is thus due by the Law of *Nature*, as well as the common Ties of *Religion*, is here further enforced *in regard of the Oath of God*: For such are the Oaths of *Supremacy*, and *Allegiance*, whereby Subjects solemnly call God to witness their Acknowledgment of the *Authority* of their Rightful Sovereign, and bind their Souls in a Bond of Obedience to him. And, 5. That

“ of

“ of the Obligation of this kind of
 “ Oath there can be no Controversy :
 “ For, unto those Things whereunto
 “ we are bound even *without* an
 “ Oath, certainly we are much more obliged by
 “ an Oath ; to wit, the new Obligation of an
 “ Oath being added unto that before, by a Pre-
 “ cept.” But it must always be remembered, (as
 herein-before has been sufficiently proved) 6. That,
 tho’ the Subject’s *Natural Allegiance* may be thus
confirmed, it cannot be *transferred* by any contrary
 Oath ; such an Oath being in itself unlawful, and
 consequently NOT THE OATH OF GOD.

Sanderſon of
 Oaths, Lect.
 iii. §. 6.

§. X. WHAT has been ſaid may ſerve for a ſuf-
 ficient Caution and Inſtruction to thoſe, who have
 been, or may be, unhappily too apt to *take God’s*
Name in vain, by any kind of Oaths or Vows,
 Curſes or Imprecations, raſhly and unadviſedly,
 without due Diſtinction of Cauſe, Occaſion or Au-
 thority, and without Reaſon, Reverence, or ſerious
 Thoughts. But, ſince there are certain *ſectaries*, in
 our Days, who, in a contrary Extreme, would
 make it a Point of Conſcience, *not to ſwear* AT
 ALL, it cannot be unſeaſonable, on their Account,
 to add a few pertinent Remarks, either to remove
 their *Prejudices*, or to expoſe, and guard againſt
 their obſtinate *Practiſe*, in this reſpect. And.

I. As to the Authority of the holy Scriptures,
 upon which they pretend chiefly to rely, if they
 would be determined thereby, the many Precepts
 and Examples of *God* the Father and *God* the Son,
 as well as of the holy Prophets and Apoſtles un-
 der the immediate Influence and Inſpiration of *God*
 the Holy Ghoſt, would infallibly demonſtrate the
Lawfulneſs, and even the *Duty*, of taking an Oath,
 on juſt and neceſſary Occaſions ; and particularly
 before any lawful Magiſtrate, in order to put an
 End

End to Strife among Men, by manifesting the Truth; or giving them Assurance of each other's Fidelity and Honesty. And therefore,

2. No tolerable Reason can be invented, to justify their scrupling to *take* an Oath, on any just and solemn Occasion, under such Cautions and Regulations as are before set forth; since "there

Tillotson, as "is, surely, no Evil in it, as it is an Act of *Religion*; nor as it is an before.

"*Appeal* to God, as a Witness, and "Avenger, in case we swear falsely; nor as it is "a *Confirmation* of a doubtful Matter; nor as it "puts an *End to Strife* and Controversy: And "these are all the *essential* Ingredients of an Oath, "and the Ends of it; and they are all so good, "that they rather commend it, than give the least "Colour of Ground to condemn it." But,

3. As to the Forms and *Ceremonies* used among us, in the taking prescribed Oaths, which some of these People are pleased to object to, as the Ground of their singular Scruples, they ought to consider, That into whatsoever *Form* the Words are put, or with whatsoever *Ceremonies* they are accompanied,

Wake, as be- "it is enough, that they make it fore, p. 73, 74. "plain, that we refer to *God*, and to "Him only, for the *Truth* of what "we speak: And then, howsoever our Words may "run, the Oath will still be understood to terminate in Him alone." Thus (as I have shew'd)

the Oaths of the Faithful, in all Ages, were in Substance the same, tho' expressed in various Forms of Words; whether by way of direct *Appeal* unto God, or solemn *Invocation* of him, or of *Imprecation* or *Adjuration*, or otherwise: For so, 'tis certain,

that even *Jacob's* swearing to *Laban*, By the Fear of his Father *Isaac*, was as solemn and formal an Oath, as if

Chap. i. §. ix.
P. 38.

if he had expressly sworn by the tremendous Name of *God*; since he was properly understood to mean the only true God, who was the sole Object of *his Father's Fear* and Worship. And so likewise,

4. As the Ceremonies used in taking Oaths have been various, in different Countries, so even those mentioned in *Scripture* do not appear to have ever been prescribed by *God*; but instituted and appointed merely by the Wisdom of Men, as a more significant Expression of their Intention, and that a more reverend Regard might thereby be impress'd upon the Mind of the Swearer. And thus, the Ceremony of laying our *Hand upon the Gospel*, and *Kissing the Book*, (which is commonly used among us, in the taking what is therefore properly called a *Corporal Oath*) is as solemn and significant, and as well authorized too, as any other Rite or Ceremony, which ever was, or can be, devised, on such Occasions; and consequently, not liable to any reasonable Objection, from any who profess and call themselves CHRISTIANS.

§. XI. UPON the Whole, it is, and long has been, the hearty Wish of all good and serious Men, that some wise Method might be devised and establish'd by Authority, for the MORE SOLEMN ADMINISTRATION of all *Oaths* whatsoever, so that every Person might be duly *admonished* of the *sacred Nature* of what he is about to do, and the heinous *Sin and Danger* of taking the holy *Name of God in vain*; always remembering that solemn and express Commination, that THE LORD WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTLESS THAT TAKETH HIS NAME IN VAIN!

F I N I S.

6 AP 58

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